

HIGHTSTOWN



EAST WINDSOR

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1996

SOCIETY'S NEWSLETTER WINS FIRST PLACE

It was learned that The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey, of which we are a member, annually reviews newsletters of their member societies and selects from among those newsletters submitted those deemed worthy of an award. In September, the Society's newsletter was submitted to the League for its consideration. In the later part of October, I was advised by League president Howard Wiseman, that the newsletter of the Hightstown-East Windsor Township Historical Society had been selected for an award. Mr. Wiseman then advised me that not only had the newsletter been selected for an award but it had been selected for First Place. Mr. Wiseman added that the newsletter was selected because of its "professional look", including its masthead, layout, and historical content. A representative of the Society was invited to be present at their annual meeting for presentation of the award on October 28, 1995. Our past newsletter Editor, Robert Craig, accepted the award on behalf of the Society.

Editor's Note - This award given to the Society for the "professional" appearance and content of our newsletter is the product of many hours put in on each issue by several members of the Society. A great part of the credit for this award and the appearance of the newsletter has to go to our past Editor, Robert Craig, and to Society members Mr. and Mrs. Donald Eldridge, who many times went above and beyond the call in helping us meet our deadlines and put out this fine newsletter. Now, that the torch has been passed to a new Editor, I can promise you that the tradition established of putting out a professional looking newsletter will continue. ♦



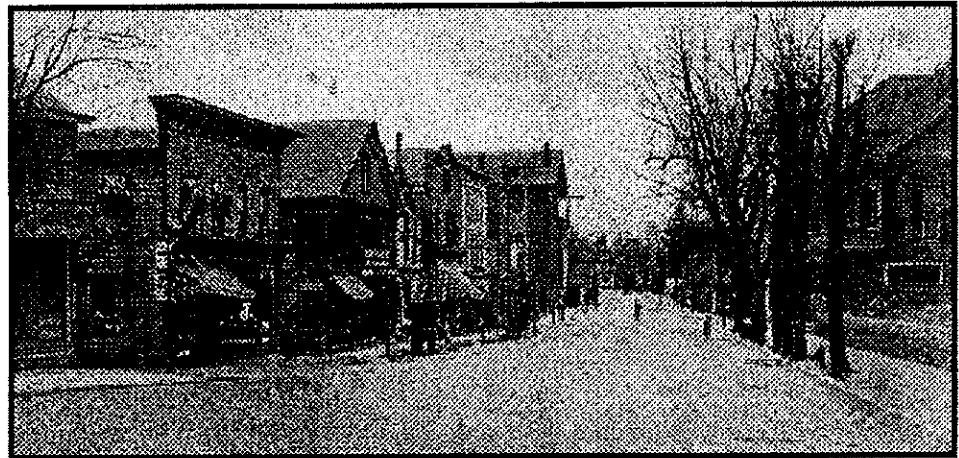
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

- 8 Business Meeting, 7:30PM (Ely House)
- 17 Our Community's Black Church History, Elaine Brown Martin, 7:30PM (Meadow Lakes Meeting Room)
- 21 Annual Dinner, Coach & Four

FEBRUARY

- 5 Business Meeting, 7:30PM (Ely House)
- 21 "Hightstown 1848 - One Will Too Many", Richard Hutchinson, 7:30PM (Meadow Lakes Meeting Room)



Main Street, Hightstown, New Jersey circa 1906.

IMAGES OF HIGHTSTOWN

With the recent release of their latest book, "Images of America - Cranbury", behind them, the authors Peggy S. and Frank J. Brennan, Jr., have currently begun work on their next publication which will deal with the early photographic history of the Hightstown-East Windsor Township area of New Jersey. The Brennans are interested in finding and using in their next book any early, identified photographs of the town, its buildings, and its people. So, look though your old photos and get them together. If you would like the Brennans to view them for possible use in their upcoming publication, you can reach them at (609) 448-2527.

Let's see if you can find some new discoveries hidden in your attics! And, if you do, please make a copy of the photograph and let the Hightstown-East Windsor Township Historical Society know about it. It may just be that missing piece of our local history! ♦

Early Area Residents

POMPEY UPDIKE

by Richard S. Hutchinson

Anyone seriously involved in New Jersey genealogy has probably heard the name of Edward J. Raser. For those of you who do not know him, let me introduce you to him. Ed has been involved in genealogy for over 50 years. He is a trustee emeritus and past president of the Genealogical Society of New Jersey and was associate editor of The Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey for over 30 years.

During the first few years of Ed's genealogical research activities, he began to realize that the old family burial grounds and small abandoned churchyards were rapidly being encroached upon by residential and commercial development, as well as being destroyed by the ravages of time. Early, he had learned that their older gravestones frequently provided enough information to enable a researcher to calculate the exact date of birth of individuals. Many times this early gravestone data proved to be the only source of such vital record's information available to the researcher in New Jersey. Therefore, Ed decided to seek out these often out-of-the-way burial places and record their valuable gravestone information for future generations. Most of his findings have been published in The Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey.

Ed also kept records of previously published lists of gravestone inscriptions, as well as of manuscript copies he found in various libraries. He is now publishing this information on a county-wide basis in what is planned as a series of New Jersey Graveyard and Gravestone Inscriptions Locators being published by the Genealogical Society of New Jersey. I first met Ed approximately three years ago when he was beginning work on his Mercer County Locator and he invited me along on a couple of his trips in our area.

In 1991, Raser learned from a Mrs. Mary Schenck of Dutch Neck, that an early burial ground for Blacks had been located where the present Dutch Neck Elementary School now stands on Village

Road in West Windsor Township, New Jersey. In finalizing his work this past summer, this information was confirmed when further research uncovered a chapter on Dutch Neck in Old Princeton's Neighbors, published by the Federal Writer's Project (WPA) in 1939. In the chapter detailing the early schools in Dutch Neck, it stated:

"Three graves were unearthed when the site of the new building (1917) was being excavated. They were identified as those of members of the Pompey Updike family, part of the land having been used as a burial ground for the Negro population many years before. The remains were removed to Hightstown."

After learning this new information, Ed called me and asked if I knew of a Black man named Pompey Updike, who was supposedly buried in the Hightstown area. I checked my work on the gravestone inscriptions for the old section of the Cedar Hill Cemetery and Pompey and his family were quickly located as being in the East section, in the 18th Row, Plot 15. I also discovered that this plot was listed as being owned by the Estate of E.J. Rogers. Now, the question was who was E.J. Rogers? And, what relationship did Rogers have to the Pompey Updike family? Through my previous research in the old records of the Cedar Hill Cemetery Association, I had learned that Job Shinn Rogers (1837-1915), had been the Superintendent of the Cedar Hill Cemetery as late as 1910. I also learned that Job Rogers was a Hightstown undertaker, who later added wall paper and furniture to his business. Was E.J. Rogers related to him? Again, research in my gravestone inscription work showed that E.J. Rogers was Elmer J. Rogers (1863-1926), the son of Job S. Rogers. Elmer also became a local undertaker and entered into business with his father in Hightstown under the name of J.S. Rogers & Son.

Elmer J. Rogers was found to be buried in the West section of Cedar Hill, in the 11th Row, Plot 24, along with his father, Job S. Rogers, and several other family members. Therefore, it would appear that Elmer J. Rogers purchased the plot where the Updike family is buried prior to his death. He apparently decided before his death in 1926, but after his father's death in 1915, that he would be buried in the same plot as his father and the previ-

ously purchased plot was apparently sold or given to those responsible for the reburial of the Pompey Updike family in 1917.

Raser continued his research on this burial ground at the Dutch Neck School site and found that later additions were made to this school in 1927, 1951, and 1956. During this past summer (1995), he spoke to Frank Walton, Sr. and learned that during the 1956 construction at the school, the remains of other individuals were discovered and construction was halted for several days. This information was verified by an article found in the Broadside regarding the Dutch Neck School, which stated:

"Our present school began as a four room school in 1917. When construction of the brick school was first starting, three graves were found. The graves were located on land that had been used as an old Negro burial ground. They were identified as members of the Pompey Updike family. As the years passed and population increased, more rooms were added...When ten additional rooms were being added in 1956, construction stopped for several days because skeletons from an old Indian burial ground were discovered and had to be moved." No further information has been uncovered concerning the removal of these other remains or their reburial.

The worn sandstones on the graves of Pompey Updike and his family in Cedar Hill Cemetery along with the fact that these three graves were the only ones that were identified, suggests that these gravestones were originally located over their graves at the initial burial site at the Dutch Neck School and may have been the only gravestones present. This theory also explains why 39 years later in 1956, the later excavations were classified as "skeletons from an old Indian burial ground." As Ed Raser indicates, "it seems just as likely that the Negro burial ground may have been larger than originally believed". The inscriptions from these old gravestones for the three members of the Updike family read:

Pompey Updike born Mar 20, 1803 - died May 14, 1890 - At Rest

Henrietta, wife of Pompey Updike - died Dec 10, 1882 - Asleep in Jesus

John Henry Updike - born Apr 16, 1870
- died July 23, 1891 - Gone Home

After finding them buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery, I checked the Mercer County Surrogate's Office for any probate files on the family but there were no filings for any of the above three names. I then checked the census records for West Windsor Twp from 1830 through 1885. Pompey was found residing in West Windsor Twp in all years except 1830 and 1870. In 1870, he was found living in Princeton Twp with a family but in later years was found back in West Windsor Township. The following information comes from the various census records:

1830 - Pompey Updike was not listed as a head of household and was not found.

1840 - Pompey Updike's household consisted of 1 Free Colored Male, aged 36-55; 1 Free Colored Female, aged 24-36; 1 Free Colored Male, aged under 10 years; 1 Free Colored Female, aged under 10 years.

1850 - Pompey Updike's household consisted of Pompey Updike, Black male, age 46, Laborer, born in New Jersey; Kate Updike, Black female, age 48, born in NJ; Furman Updike, Black male, age 10, born NJ; Sarah Brown, Black female, age 65.

1860 - Pompey Updike's household consisted of Pompey, age 57, Farm Laborer, with Real estate valued at \$500 & personal property valued at \$100; Lucy A. Updike, Black female, age 49, born NJ; Furman E. Updike; Black male, age 18, born NJ. [Living at the next residence to Pompey Updike's home was a family in their 70s with a Diana Updike, Black female, born NJ, who was listed as "Slave Servant".]

1870 - Pompey and his family were living in the household of Sarah Schenck, White female, age 50, with three children ages 16, 11, and 9. Pompey was listed as a Farm Hand, age 65; and his household consisted of himself; Hannah Updike, Black female, age 24; and John H. Updike, Black male, age 3/12ths.

1880 - Pompey Updike's household consisted of Pompey, age 77, Farmer; Henrietta Updike, Black female, age 38, wife & keeping house; John H. Updike, Black male, age 10, son & at school.

1885 - (NJ State Census) - Pompey Updike's household consisted of Pompey Updike, Black male, age over 60, who was living alone. [His son, John, was living at the next farm of Jacob H. Stults, with his wife and child. John Updike was listed as a Black male, age 5-20.]

[From the above, it would appear that Pompey Updike may have been married at least three different times, with his later wives being considerably younger than he. This suggests he may have been a well-developed and youthful appearing man.]

It can be shown that Pompey was married at least twice through a deed dated 23 November 1852 [Mercer County - Vol 40-Page 492], which shows "Pompey Updike and Lucy his wife coloured of the township of West Windsor...county of Mercer..." sold "All that Certain Lot or parcel of land and premises...in the township of East Windsor", consisting of one acre of land to James D. Hall of Upper Freehold Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey, for \$150. This one acre piece of property adjoined the other lands owned by Hall. When Pompey and his wife signed their names, both he and Lucy made their marks. The deed was witnessed by James McGalliard, Commissioner, and was recorded on 15 May 1858.

[Based upon the 1860 census, Pompey subsequently owned other real estate in West Windsor Township with a value of \$500. However, there were no other grantee or grantor filings for the name Pompey Updike filed in Mercer County after 1852.]

I thought that this was probably the end of my research into Pompey Updike but then I unexpectedly found his name on a list from an estate's collection attempts regarding those whose names appeared in the account books of a deceased individual. [This was the time when everyone extended credit to each other and everyone maintained their own account books.] The list showed the person's name and the amount they owed in the account books. All the dates [1863 or 1864] listed in this document represented the date the individuals had paid their debt. The earliest date was April 1863. Throughout this document, the person collecting the debts wrote little remarks behind some of the names; i.e. "Zouuve Club political party

HIGHTSTOWN EAST WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

founded 1971

Serving Hightstown Borough
and East Windsor Township
609-371-9580

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not collectable", "Good for Nothing", "Sue Him", "Not Collectable", etc. At the end of the document was the following: "Those marked with line over the names dead, poor or gone to army & nothing collected." The most prevalent notation behind the names was "Sue Him" but of course the individual collecting the debts and writing these little comments was a local attorney named Joseph J. Ely, who was being helped by Israel Pearce. On the list of names, as number "176", was the name "Pompey Updike \$33.53" with a line drawn

through the name and behind his name was written "Gone to War". However, another name is written in the space above Pompey's name. Now, I doubt that the "Gone to War" refers to the above Pompey as a soldier because he would have been 60 years old in 1863. [However, this is still possible.] Did this reference refer to a family member with the same name, did Pompey go to war perhaps in supply or transport, or was it an error? Further research is needed to shed light on this intriguing question.

Today, all three gravestones of Pompey and his family are broken off and lying on the ground, as are so many others in the old section of Cedar Hill Cemetery. These stones were probably broken off by vandals or the cemetery's own lawn mowers. It would be really nice if someday those in responsible positions within the Cedar Hill Cemetery Association would begin resetting these older stones, whose families are for the most part now all deceased, so that future generations might learn from the information recorded on them. ♦

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

Don't forget that the Hightstown-East Windsor Township Historical Society will hold its Annual Dinner on Sunday, January 21st at 2:00 p.m. at the Coach & Four Restaurant, Rt. 33, Hightstown, New Jersey. This year's featured speaker will be Robert B. Burnett, a member of the History Department faculty of Bloomfield College, Kean College, and the County College of Morris. Mr. Burnett will present an engaging slide-illustrated lecture on "Sports and Leisure in Victorian New Jersey."

FREE FAMILY HISTORY PROGRAM

The Monmouth County Genealogy Club will present a free program, "Writing Your Family History", on Sunday, January 14th at 2:00 p.m., at the Christ Church Meeting Hall, Broad and Sycamore Avenues, Shrewsbury, New Jersey, with refreshments at 1:30 p.m. The program will be presented by Sylvia Kramer of West Orange, New Jersey. Ms. Kramer is an instructor at Brookdale Community College and conducts creative writing workshops on various topics. Parking is available in the expanded lot behind the hall. For further information, you can contact the Monmouth County Historical Association at (908) 462-1466. ♦

THE JACOB WHITTICK QUILT

On the 13th of August, 1857, *The Hightstown Excelsior*, the local paper for Hightstown, New Jersey, printed an article dealing with a quilt that had been presented to a member of the Hightstown community. The editor of the paper took the time to note with an "asterisk" those members of the community in his story who were deceased. The article read as follows:

"A quilt was shown us a few days ago, by Mr. Jacob Whittick of this place, presented to him fifteen years ago. The name of each person who presented a block is written thereon. It may be interesting to those who were present at the time this beautiful specimen of needlework was finished to recall their minds to that occasion, by giving the name entire. Several names that there appear are only present with us now by memory, to enjoy a better inheritance.

In the centre of the quilt the following words appear: "Presented to Mr. Jacob Whittick, by the ladies and gentlemen of Hightstown, N.J., 1842."

The names are given precisely as written on each block:

Miss Gertrude Applegat, Meriba Norris, John T. Hutchinson, William T. Purdy*, Lydia Barclay, Miss Jane C. Purdy, Mrs. A. Ely, Beard Wycoff, Mary Giberson, Lewis Perrine, Miss Elizabeth Hutchinson, Thomas Johnson, Lydia Hutchinson, Joseph S. Ely, Daniel P. Hutchinson, Ruth Reed, Lydia Ann Cox, William T. Ewen, Kenneth Applegat*, Margaret B. Norris, Adaline Hutchinson, Cornelia Hutchinson*, Robert H. Wilson, Mrs. Rachel D. Miller, Acsah Dey*, John Bilyou, Mary Wells*, John C. Ward, Ann Elizabeth Perrine, Ira Smock, Sarah Ann H. Wilson, John Dey, Mrs. Mary C. Purdy, Matilda Johnston, Nancy Morris, Richard M. Job, Julia A. Imlay, Abijah Mount, Mary Bilyou, Joseph Jameson, Jane Cutter, William C. Rowland, James M. Cubberly, Robert C. Purdy, Euphemia Miller*, Peter Bilyou, Rachel Valentine, Joshua Rue, Mrs. Mary A. Purdy, Joseph Perrine, Disbrow Applegat*, Aaron Hutchinson*, Jane E. Purdy, Peter Wilson, Abner H. Reed, Mary E. Norris,

Clayton I. Coward, Thomas Applegat, William Smith, Christian Giberson, Mrs. Margaret Ward, Lucy Ann Johnes*, William Seaman*, Ann E. Hankinson, Sarah T. Miller, Jonathan E. McChesney, Hannah Perrine, Reuban Morris, Mary Purdy, Anthony A. Wilson, Helen Anderson, John Purdy*, Rachel H. Miller, Elizabeth Dey*, Emeline Jamison, Mrs. Abigail Smith, Armenia Hutchinson*, John Poland, Mary Elizabeth Smith, Ward Perrine, Rebecca Hutchinson, Mary Applegat, Sarah J. Norris, Rebecca Ward, R.M. Smith, Daniel Johnes, Charlotte Ann Skinner, Israel C. Purdy, Lydia Wycoff*."

The reason for the presentation of the quilt to Whittick in 1842 is presently unknown. However, a great many of the above named individuals, aside from those bearing the Hutchinson surname, are descended from or related to two Hutchinson family lines from this area of central New Jersey; the line of William and Ann (Simpson) Hutchinson, of East Windsor Twp, and the line of Jonathan and Elizabeth (Dissoyway) Hutchinson, of West Windsor Twp, New Jersey. According to the 1850 Census of East Windsor Township and the 1860 Census of Hightstown, both in Mercer County, New Jersey, Jacob Whittick was by occupation a "Hatter". He was born in Pennsylvania on the 11th of January 1810 and died in Hightstown, New Jersey, on the 18th of January in 1878. He is buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery, in Hightstown, next to his wife, Cornelia (Hutchinson) Whittick, who died on the 27th of August in 1848, at the age of 29 years. Cornelia was the daughter of Rev. Sylvester and Phebe Hutchinson of the William and Ann (Simpson) Hutchinson line. ♦



A HISTORY OF ELY HOUSE

by Robert W. Craig

[NOTE: The following is adapted from a talk given at the dedication of the Catherine and Ben Hernwall Room at Ely House, on September 20, 1995]

A mental exercise that I sometimes undertake is to travel in my mind around a town or city, reconstructing its development by looking at where buildings got built and when. What I get by doing this is a brief historical geography of a town. It's a nifty armchair exercise, but it requires knowing both a community's history and its architecture. Since I work in Trenton I sometimes do it there, changing the buildings I think about each time. It works because, just like today, when an important institution arises within or comes into a community, it usually takes up land on the edge of the developed area, where land in sufficient quantities and reasonable prices is still available. One definition of a well-preserved community that I like is one in which a well-trained newcomer can perform this exercise easily. Hightstown is a well-enough preserved place that one can still see this social geography.

I can illustrate this using Ely House. The village of Hightstown began in the late 1740s, about 100 years before this house was built. And as with all population centers, the most advantageous sites are usually the first ones taken up. Before the Revolution, the gristmill, the sawmill, the taverns, a couple of houses, the blacksmith shop, a tanyard, and some other shops took up sites in what we would consider to be the downtown area. Benjamin Ward's tavern, for example, stood on the site of Cunningham's Pharmacy; John Hight's tavern stood on the site of the driveway in front of the firehouse. When the Baptist Church came to Hightstown from Cranbury in 1785, the nearest available, suitable site was the high ground to the south of the millpond--where the church has been ever since. And one can tell without knowing much about the community that the Baptist church was the first to arrive because its site is closest to the center. The first real residential neighborhood of Hightstown was along lower Stockton Street. Houses began to appear

there by the 1780s, if not earlier, and the house that became what we know of as the Smith house was built there by 1815, possibly before. Mercer Street came into being by 1817 as the Bordentown and South Amboy Turnpike, but it went through a meadow on either side of Grape Brook in the vicinity of today's post office, a topographic situation that made lower Mercer Street unattractive for housebuilding. It would develop commercial uses later on. Meanwhile, a spring in Stockton Street in front of the "Smith" house gave Hightstown its first, primitive public water system.

The Camden & Amboy Railroad took advantage of this terrain in 1831 to drive its right-of-way through the middle of town, instead of coming in on the western edge. To do so, however, the railroad had to build a trestle over the low ground near Rocky Brook, with bridges at Main Street and Stockton Street. This engineered right-of-way with its raised embankment and trestle split the lower Stockton Street residential area off from the business area along Main Street, forcing a tighter development of the downtown than might otherwise have happened, while at the same time greatly increasing Hightstown's growth potential. What happened in the wake of the railroad was the most rapid real estate development and population increase in Hightstown's history. In the 45 years between the arrival of the railroad in 1831 and the Centennial celebration in 1876, Hightstown's population grew thirteen-fold.

The railroad encouraged many to come to Hightstown. The Methodists came back from their 50-year sojourn in Etra in 1835, but by that time land values along Stockton Street pushed them out as far as the present Church Street.

Within the next ten years, houses began to spread, very slowly, up North Main Street and down South Main Street. In 1850, the legislature would take notice of all the building activity going on here by extending the provisions of the "mechanic lien" law to cover Hightstown and East Windsor.

We know something about the land that Ely House was built on. In the 1700s, it was part of John Hight's first purchase-

President's Column

As we enter the New Year, the future of our Society promises to be very bright.

You have been apprised via the news media and our business meetings of Miss Josephine Dawes' most generous and visionary proposal for our Society and our community. Miss Dawes proposes to move the Freight Station to another location within the Borough and to construct "... a new wing with proper architecture to the Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society for the main purpose of a meeting room." A committee composed of Joel Larson, Frank Brennan, Jr., George Dubell and your president will work with our legal counsel, David H. Coates, Esquire, on the implementation of this exciting proposal. We are deeply appreciative of Miss Dawes' generosity and her concern for both the community of Hightstown and the Hightstown-East Windsor Township Historical Society.

Our Society continues to need your support in recruiting new members, volunteering to help with programs and activities, and attending our meetings and programs. These are a few of the ways whereby every member can make our Society increasingly effective.

Please remember the Society in your year-end and new year giving. Your contributions will assure that our rich history will be carried into the future.

In Memoriam

On Thursday, December 14, 1995, Baldwin Maull, 95, born in Wilmington, Delaware, the ex-Director of the Marine Midland Trust Co., passed away at Meadow Lakes, Hightstown, New Jersey. Mr. Maull, a lifetime member of the Hightstown-East Windsor Township Historical Society, had lived in New York City, Buffalo, New York; and Princeton, New Jersey. Mr. Maull is survived by his wife, Flora; a son, Baldwin, Jr.; a daughter, Diana; and two grandchildren.

DO YOU JUST BELONG?

Are you an active member,
The kind that would be missed!
Or are you just contented
That your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings
And mingle with the crowd,
Or do you stay at home and
crab both long and loud?

Do you ever go to visit
A member who is sick?
Or leave the work for just a few
And talk about the clique?

There is quite a program scheduled,
That means success, if done,
And it can be accomplished
With help from everyone.

So attend the meetings regularly
And help with hand and heart
Don't just be a member
But take an active part.

Think this over, member,
Are we right or are we wrong?
Are you an active member,
Or.....do you just belong?

Author Unknown

Editor's note - This poem is reprinted from the October 1995 newsletter of the Clermont County Genealogical Society, Clermont Co, Ohio. ♦



ELY HOUSE HISTORY

Cont. from page 5

-the 80 acres he bought in 1747 on which he built his tavern and his gristmill. The tavern lot was set off in the 1770s, and it passed through several hands until it came into the estate of Captain William Smith in the 1790s. When his estate was split up in 1798, this tavern lot included the future site of Ely House, and from about 13 to 17 acres. In the 1830s, Benjamin Reed, an enterprising man who was instrumental in starting the fire company in 1835, began to buy up land in the northern part of the village--north of Rocky Brook--anticipating setting off lots in a subdivision. Reed got a half-interest in the tavern lot in 1839 and he bought up the other half in 1840. But he quickly sold the parcel to a relative, Abner H. Reed, who kept it until January 1849.

The man who bought the property was William P. Lott, a Cranbury man. Lott was the son of a long-time Cranbury physician and was himself a doctor, but he evidently made more money speculating in real estate, and we think it was he who probably paid to have Ely House built, probably in the year 1849. Thus we would be within our rights to call it the "William P. Lott house." It was of good size though conservative design. It combined a modified, two-room deep Georgian-type floor plan with a central stair hall that had been popular for nearly ninety years by that time, and the four chimneys, the large-paned 6-over-6 windows and the central window with sidelights on the second floor might have been included in any house built after 1800. Yet, inside, the house was more up-to-date, with a fashionable staircase and simple Greek Revival *ovolo* moldings on the mantelpieces and wood trim. Lott held the property until 1852, and when he sold it, the deed of conveyance mentions a house for the first time. Before the sale, the property was advertised in the *Village Record* as "almost new."

The man who bought the house from Lott was James M. Cubberly, the "cashier" or manager of Hightstown's newest economic institution, the Central Bank of New Jersey. Thus we could also call it the "Cubberly House," if we chose to. The bank had been chartered by the State Leg-

islature in 1852, and like the local newspaper that had gotten started three years before, it was the only institution of its kind for many miles. The nearest banks were in New Brunswick, Princeton, Trenton, Freehold, and Bordentown. Like similar lending institutions elsewhere, banks helped their communities economically by fostering more rapid and efficient circulation of money and capital. The Hightstown bank offered checking accounts, savings accounts, mortgage and business loans, and it issued its own paper money, known as banknotes..

Cubberly was no doubt attracted to this house because his bank stood next door. It was the presence of this institution that caused the new street that was opened just to the north to be called "Bank Street." The bank continued for many years, finally merging with the First National Bank of Hightstown in 1879. The building was afterwards converted into the Hightstown Episcopal Church, which occupied it until well into the 20th century. However, it was torn down in 1959 after being vacant for a number of years.

The Cubberlys, James and his wife Hannah, remained in this house through the 1880s. They were probably responsible for adding the High Victorian Italianate mantelpieces that grace the double parlor. The 2-over-2 window sash on the front of the house may have also been early replacements installed for the Cubberlys. They probably also added the back, or kitchen wing, onto the house. (The 1895 "bird's-eye" map of Hightstown shows the house with this wing already added.) When James died in 1889, the property descended to their daughter, Anna M. Rogers, wife of Elmer J. Rogers. They lived here until just before World War One.

The connection with the Ely family began during the early 20th century. Joseph J. Ely bought the house in February 1917 from Anna Rogers. This Joseph J. was the grandson of his namesake: the nineteenth-century attorney, antiquarian, and local historian, an abundance of whose papers we now possess. Joe Ely had been a Millstone Township farmer, and he brought his family of several children here to live. Among them was Huldah Ely, who gave a career of teaching in the Hightstown public schools. She took title

to the house in 1954, after her father died, and she continued to live here, for the rest of her life.

Huldah died in 1972, just when a the historical society, an organization only a year and a half old, was beginning to look for a permanent headquarters. After considering various possibilities, Huldah Ely's house was selected, and a contract was worked out with the executors. In July 1973, a sale of the household furnishings was held in the side yard, and quite a large number of antiques and many old books and manuscripts were bought for the Society by its members. After working out financial arrangements, the Society finally took title in 1974, and under the direction of and with the labor of Milton and Betty Cunningham and others, this Bicentennial project of repairs and repainting was brought to completion. The Society dedicated its headquarters as "Ely House," on June 29, 1976.

(The author wishes to thank Clark J. Hutchinson for sharing the results of his title search of the Ely House property.)◆



Society Donations

MARION EMBLEY COLLECTION COMES TO THE SOCIETY

During this past month, the Society acquired a collection of photographs and other materials from the Estate of Marion Embley. Among some of the photographs in the material are photographs showing the Universalist Church being torn down, Benjamin Reed and family, and the Reed's brick yard operations. Also included in the donation, are photographs taken in the early 1900s with written identification of many members of the Hightstown community.

ROGERS FAMILY REMEMBERANCES DONATED TO THE SOCIETY

Lloyd Rogers, a long time member of the Hightstown community, presented the Society at its last business meeting with two bound manuscripts, containing his handwritten, personal remembrances of the early years of Hightstown and the surrounding areas. One manuscript deals with the area of Hightstown-East Windsor Township while the other deals with the area of Imlaystown, NJ.

Editor's Note - The Society is always interested in obtaining local materials of historical value. There are literally hundreds of family photographs of historical value to this community sitting in the attics of our community members. If you know of any such material, speak to those possessing the items and ask if they would consider donating them to the Society or at least allowing the Society to make copies. Also, when giving thought to the distribution of your estate, consider giving these historical items to the Society so that they may be preserved while preserving our past for the education of our future generations.◆

ANNUAL BANQUET

Coach & Four Restaurant

*Route 33, Hightstown, New Jersey
Sunday, January 21, 1996*

Menu:

Coach & Four Garden Salad

Entrees: (Please indicate number of entrees ordered)

\$17.00 _____ Chicken ala Francaise, w/lemon sauce

\$17.00 _____ Baked Filet of Flounder

\$20.00 _____ English Cut Boneless Prime Rib

Dessert: Ice Cream Sundae

Send reservations with check payable to: "H.E.W. Historical Society" to:

Mrs. Clara Thomas, 951 Old York Road, Hightstown, New Jersey 08520

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____

Join today. Become a member!

Yearly Membership:

Individual \$15

Family \$20

Membership Mailing Address:

Ely House

164 North Main Street

Hightstown, New Jersey 08520

Historian's Notebook

Research Tips: Mechanic Liens

by Robert W. Craig

People who research old houses already know how important deeds and wills are for tracing title to real property, and how to find them in the County Clerk's record vault, but they often overlook other records that could be of great help in unraveling the mysteries of when their houses were built and who built them. One potential source of considerable help are the mechanic liens. "Mechanic Liens, what are they," you ask? Beginning in the 19th century, any workman, contractor, or supplier of materials for a construction job could place a lien on the property where the work was taking place if he didn't get paid. If that didn't spring loose the money he was owed, then he could institute a lawsuit to recover his due. But the lien meant that the property was encumbered, not just the person who ordered the work to be done.

The important point is that a whole series of records were created that in some cases identify when specific buildings were constructed and allow them to be attributed to the architects who designed them, the builders who constructed them, or the suppliers who furnished their components.

In Mercer County, the mechanic liens were recorded in a book or docket in the order in which they were received, and the records begin in the year 1853, the year that the state law was amended to require all county clerks to start recording them.

The early Mechanic Lien books are kept upstairs at the County Clerk's office, and they begin designated by letter, "A," "B," etc., and a quick look at volume "A" shows that it has some interesting local content. On page 38 of volume A, for example, a partnership under the name of R.C. Hutchinson & Sons filed a lien against one Clark S. Hutchinson, on March 31, 1857, after they had completed building him a 2-story, frame carriage house, 40 feet by 24 feet, on the east side of what is now South Main Street in Hightstown, on a lot that the latter Hutchinson had bought from John

C. Ward on January 25, 1855. The partnership claimed that they were owed \$283.24, which was probably a substantial fraction of the cost of the building.

The records will not tell you if the aggrieved builder was paid, or if he filed and/or won a lawsuit; you'd have to look at court records to find that out. But if you want to find out whether a specific owner arranged for the construction or improvement of the house he was living in, look at the index to mechanic liens. They are commonly indexed at least by property owner's name, sometimes also by claimant. ♦



Hightstown-East Windsor
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