

HIGHTSTOWN



EAST WINDSOR

NEW

JERSEY

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1999

## THE IRREVERENT REVEREND?

by Richard S. Hutchinson

Everyone studying the history of Hightstown knows that Rogers Avenue was once known as Morrison Street; not to be confused with the present day Morrison Avenue. Both of these streets were named for the Reverend Robert E. Morrison, who once lived in the beautiful white house sitting to the rear of the large lot on the corner of Morrison Avenue and Summit Street. But, very little is known about Reverend Morrison, who also became the President of the Central Bank of New Jersey, which was the local bank in Hightstown.

Reverend Morrison was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1800. He was a minister of the Methodist faith and held a position with the Crosswicks



*Morrison home, corner of Morrison Avenue and Summit Street, Hightstown.*

Methodist Church. In this church's cemetery, some of his family members lie buried. He eventually made his way to Hightstown where he was more of a business man than a minister, the result of his having trouble speaking due to a throat problem. As far as can be

ascertained, he never had a position with the local Methodist Church.

One of his business ventures, was the peach drying business, as this area was once known for its peach crop. He built a kiln and began drying the local product. However, the business did not prosper. Morrison also bought and sold a great deal of land both in and around the community. As president of the Central Bank of New Jersey, he became a respected and prominent member of the community. However, in the summer of 1858, people in the community began to talk quietly among themselves about what was going on "at the bank"; their bank! People be-

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## THE SARA HUTCHINSON WEST EDUCATIONAL CENTER DEDICATION

On Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society dedicated the newly renovated Camden-Amboy Railroad freight station as the Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center honoring their benefactor; the Estate of Sara Hutchinson West.

It was obvious to the hundreds attending the dedication and to those who toured the Ely House and the 1869 Hightstown freight station that the members of the Society put forth a tremendous amount of time and effort to make the day a success. The Society, its officers and the community truly thank you for the effort and many hours that you gave to make the day a success. The Society and the community finally have a facility to properly display the numerous artifacts which show the heritage of this central New Jersey region.

**(Photographs of the dedication ceremony, and those who helped make it possible on page 21.**



### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### NOVEMBER

- 1 Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Ely House
- 18 Program Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Meadow Lakes, "History of Hightstown's Paper Money"

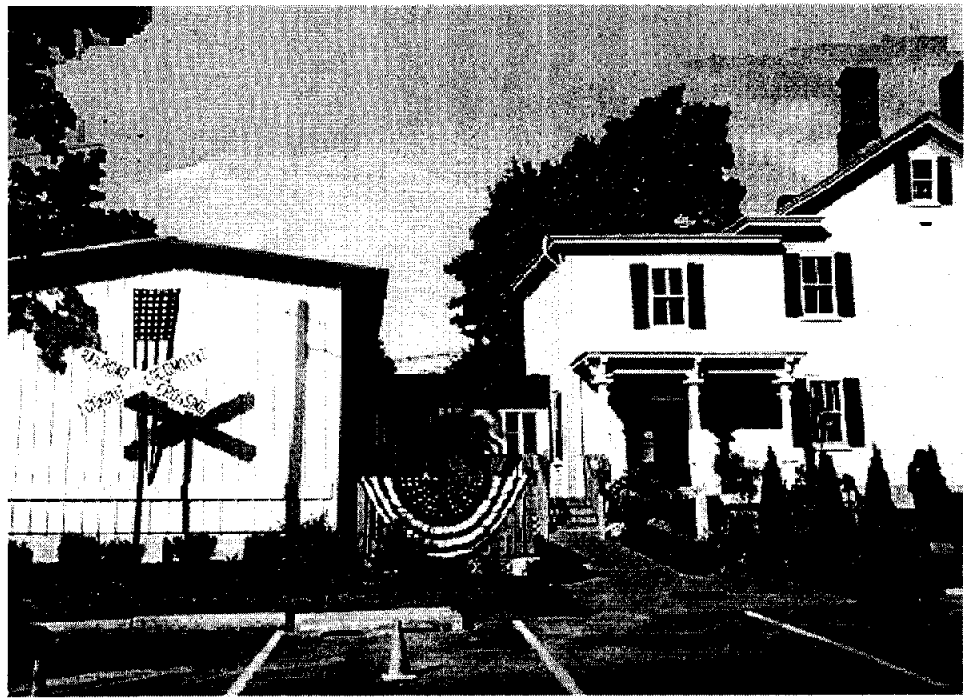
#### DECEMBER

- 5 Christmas Tea, 1-4:00 p.m., Ely House
- 6 Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Ely House

# PHOTOS FROM THE SARA HUTCHINSON WEST EDUCATIONAL CENTER DEDICATION



Frank Janda, of the Lions Club, puts the finishing touches on the PRR crossing sign.



Completed Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center, deck and newly resided Ely House.



During the dedication of the Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center, Dr. Edgar C. Thomas, Jr. introduced Richard S. Hutchinson, co-executor of the Estate of Sara Hutchinson West. Hutchinson was presented with a framed program of the day's events by Charles S. Stults, III.



Robin Smith, Chairperson for Dedication puts finishing touches on wall.



New sign facing North Main Street, Hightstown, welcomes visitors.



Some of the crowd enjoying the displays in the new interior of the south end of the freight station.



Boy Scouts and others did the landscaping for the Ely House for the dedication. Thank you!

## Special Thanks

Dear Members of the Historical Society,

On behalf of the Society, I wish to thank the many members and businesses that made our dedication of the Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center so successful. Not only did we have 350-400 people attend, we also had wonderful weather and a great time. Dr. Edgar Thomas performed the dedication and introduced the Hutchinson family giving gave a short history about Sara Hutchinson West; followed by a short history of this organization. Exactly nine years ago, the freight station was moved from its former location at Coca Cola, on Summit Street to the Society's property. The freight station will house our many museum collections that we could not display in the past because of limited space. The back part of the station is the library and will contain shelving for our many books and written materials. We still need to purchase tables and chairs so that school children and adults have a place to work on their projects.

I wish to give a special thanks to my husband, Warren, for the many hours given to "clerking" the big construction project. Gene O'Connor, our architect, and Suzanne Fallon, our interior designer, were instrumental in getting the designs and colors appropriate for a museum. I want to thank the Museum Committee, Jackie Hart and Julie Ely, and Ann Willis, who worked all summer getting our displays recorded and ready. Robin Smith is to be commended for chairing the celebration and organizing displays. Thanks also to: Skip Cox - Memorial for Bill Howell; Cathy Capozzi-posters and programs; Dick and Ronnie Lee, Central Jersey Antique Car Club, Assemblywoman Barbara Wright - \$10,00 grant; Richard Teller-our new sign; The Friday Club, The Junior Friday Club, The Hightstown Woman's Club, The Rocky Brook Garden Club, Old Hights Print Shop, Gordon & Wilson, Borough of Hightstown (Larry Blake and Carl Dey); John Kilbride - John Bull Display; Postcards donated by Allen & Stults, PNC Bank, Worldwide Auctions (Chris Gould); Hightstown/E.W. Lions Club; Willis Hancock & Frank Janda-Railroad sign; Daisy Troop 1639; Nate Smith and Boy Scout Troop 64 (Eagle Scout Landscape Project); Boy Scout Troop 59 (flag display); U.S. Postal Service; Ebby Carsen, Warren and Janet Field, Kim Downham -scrapbooks; Suzanne, Clark and Hazel Hutchinson-Sara West display; Nancy Laudemberger, Dale Grubb, Marion Rock, Edgar Thomas, Skip and Jane Cox, Lois Groendyke, Frank Brennan, Meg Kibble, Beth Wham, Eileen Couturier, Kate Middleton, Bill and Estelle Craig, Mary Mastoris, Diane McCarthy, Frances Pane, Bob Patten, Barbara Walker, Carol Nelson, Bud Perrine, Richard and Amanda Pratt, Roger and Fran Cook, Tom Olsen, Rev. Suzanne Coates; Music - Fred Doscher and Diane Lindberg; Dilys Henniger - basket display; Terri Tuliszewski - quilt display; Olsen's Barn, Kathryn Dennis, Phil McAuliffe - publicity. The Society made a profit of \$800 selling postcards and produce from Lee's Turkey Farm. Postcards are still available and can be purchased. *Shirley Olsen*

### WAITING

8 September 1881 - "The Cedar Hill Cemetery Association has better meet and properly define the duties of its officer and trustees. It is not quite the thing to allow a corpse to remain unburied over night while the question of who shall sell lots is being discussed."

## HIGHTSTOWN EAST WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Hightstown, New Jersey  
founded 1971*

609-371-9580

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

*Editor, Richard S. Hutchinson*

—————  
Officers for 1999-2000

- Shirley Olsen (609-448-8388) ..... President
- Nancy Laudemberger ..... Vice-President
- Charles Stults, III ..... Recording Secretary
- Lois Groendyke ..... Corresponding Secretary
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- Kate Middleton (609-448-5347) ..... Library
- Dale Grubb (609-448-4495) ..... Membership
- Jackie Hart (609-371-1353) ..... Museum
- and
- Julie Ely (609-448-3155) ..... Museum
- Harold C. Cox, Jr. (609-448-0037) ..... Programs
- and
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- Bud Perrine (609-448-1376) ..... Property
- and
- Warren Olsen (609-448-8388) ..... Property
- Peggy Brennan (609-395-7958) ..... Publications
- Meg Kibble (609-448-3108) ..... Publicity

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- Frank Brennan, Jr.
- Dr. Harold C. Cox
- Suzann Fallon
- Lois Groendyke
- Willis Hancock
- Shirley Olsen
- Warren Olsen
- Dr. Edgar Thomas, Jr.

Genealogical queries pertaining to the Hightstown-East Windsor Township area are accepted, but will be printed as space allows.

Typeset by Cori Hutchinson Quinlan  
Quinlan Processing 609-888-4028

## HIGHTSTOWN-EAST WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January 3	7:30PM	Business Meeting, Ely House
January 23	1:30PM	Annual Banquet - Coach & Four Restaurant -- More details as to menu, prices and registration to follow in the January issue.
February 7	7:30PM	Business Meeting, Ely House
February 17	7:30PM	Program at Meadow Lakes
March 6	7:30PM	Business Meeting, Ely House
March 16	7:30PM	Program at Meadow Lakes
April 3	7:30PM	Business Meeting, Ely House
April 20	7:30PM	Program at Meadow Lakes
May 1	7:30PM	Business Meeting, Ely House
May 18	7:30PM	Program at Meadow Lakes, Students from East Windsor schools
June 5	7:30PM	Business Meeting, Ely House

### REVEREND MORRISON

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came concerned about their savings as rumors began to spread. All they knew, was that the bank's holdings were less than previously reported. But, apparently there was more to the rumors than people were being told. Then, very suddenly, Reverend Morrison and two other bank officers were quietly removed from their positions and also found themselves no longer associated with the bank. It soon became apparent to the "outsiders" of the local banking circle that something had happened at the bank but no one wanted to talk about it. What had happened to cause this quiet, but abrupt, departure from the bank of several of the upstanding individuals of the Hightstown community? No one, including those who had been let go, would comment about the cause which further fueled the public's speculation and rumor. Surely, if nothing was wrong within the bank and the

public's finances were secure, one would think that these respected members of the community, and one being the president of the bank, would come forward to explain. Yet, everyone remained silent.

The first hints of any type of problem within the bank were brought to light by the local press. In the June 5<sup>th</sup> 1858 issue of the *Hightstown Excelsior*, the following article is found:

"Attempt to Rob the Central Bank - On Tuesday night of last week some daring miscreants attempted to break into the bank, but were foiled. It appears that the robbers commenced operations in the director's room where marks of a crow bar was discovered on one of the windows next morning, but the fastenings proving too strong for the gentlemen, they had to give in, and mizzled leaving their opinion of the

bank in large letters on a board which they set on top of the building. It is believed that some of these concerned in this affair live in the borough, and steps have been taken to bring them to justice. We understand that the board spoken of above was seen partly painted the day before the attempted burglary and it is supposed that it was the intentions of the robbers if they had been successful, to have added another line and left it as their *card*. We suppose the matter will be investigated by the next grand jury, and in the meantime a strict watch will be kept over the suspected parties."

People within the community wondered if this attempted entry into the bank's board of director's room had anything to do with the quiet departure of the bank's officers? Was someone attempting to obtain more than money by breaking into the board of

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director's offices? At this point in time, no one will ever know. However, the minutes of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of New Jersey, which survive today in the Hightstown - East Windsor Historical Society's manuscript collection, may shed some light onto this apparent dark secret.

The minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1858, show the following persons present: "B. Reed, Geo. Hunt, I. Pullen, R. M. Job, E. Allen, Jas. D. Robins, C. Wyckoff, E. C. Taylor. Edward C. Taylor was appointed secretary. Minutes of last meeting read and confirmed. Theodore Ely and David Okerson were allowed interest on a special deposit according to an agreement made by R. E. Morrison late president ... E.C. Taylor, B. Reed, E. Allen & R. M. Job were appointed a committee to burn seventy five thousand dollars of circulation ..."

The bank at this time had total liabilities of \$265,012 with assets of loans and discounts outstanding of \$219,640. The strongest suggestion of a major problem within the bank can be found in the bank's minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1858, in a resolution offered by board director James D. Robins: "Whereas, there has facts come to our knowledge since the recent defalcation of some fourty thousand dollars, and other fraudulent loans and contracts by which this institution is swindled out of fourty thousand dollars more, and whereas the late president cashier and clerk have conspired to conceal these facts from the directors by covering up their defalcations by false statements there and other misdemeanors committed by them we believe should not go unpunished; therefore - Resolved, That the president of this institution be directed to lodge all these facts before the Grand Jury of Mercer in order that the guilty parties, if guilty, may be brought to justice. The ayes and nays were ordered on the above as

follows - Ayes - Jas. A. Reed, Geo. Hunt, Jas. D. Robins, Enoch Allen, Isaac Pullen, C. Wyckoff, R.M. Job, E. C. Taylor. Nays - None. The preamble and resolutions were declared unanimously carried."

Further information concerning the bank's internal problems appeared in the August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1858, issue of the *Hightstown Excelsior*: "We understand that the board of directors of this institution at their August meeting, resolved to have new bills struck in place of the old fashioned affairs now in use. This we think is a good move, as the appearance of the old issue will always call to mind the days of terror, through which the institution has fortunately safely passed. It is the intention we believe to have the small bills printed retaining the same vignette on most of them, while the larger denominations are to have entirely new designs. We are happy to learn that the affairs of this institution are being placed on a profitable footing, most of the losses having been advanced by the stockholders to be refunded when recovered from those charged with misappropriations, legal steps for that purpose have been taken. Too much credit cannot be awarded to the officers who have brought about this happy result, and instituted a faithful and impartial overhauling of those who by mismanagement, if nothing worse, endangered the stability of one of the best institutions in the state. It is an unpleasant task to call those to account who have stood high in the community, but impartial justice demands that the cry of robbed widows and orphans should not pass unheeded, even if the exercise of that justice should expose to view corruption, where nothing but purity was supposed to abide."

The gravity of the situation at the bank can be further seen in the bank's minutes of September 6, 1858: "...

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## President's Message

Greetings to all officers, committees, and members of the Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society. Our Society members have really been busy all summer working on the many displays for the dedication and celebration of the Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center. This is the culmination of the refurbishing of the Hightstown Freight Station of the Camden Amboy Railroad that was built in 1869. The educational center will truly be an asset to the school children of our district and to our Society for many functions since the freight station can accommodate large groups.

The efforts of our past Society presidents, Dr. Edgar C. Thomas, Jr for two terms; and Dr. Harold C. Cox, Jr; the other officers, committees and members during the past three years, working with our architect, Eugene O' Connor, have enabled us to complete a job that was begun many years ago. This project was only able to be completed due to the generous funding by the executors of the Estate of Sara Hutchinson West. As President of our Society, I would personally like to thank them for their generous gift. In addition to the above work, the estate's funding also allowed the Society to completely reside the Ely House, which was in need of repair, with new cedar siding. The Society can stand proud of this beautiful structure that has now, once again, become an outstanding addition ready to service our community.

I would also like to thank our 14<sup>th</sup> District Assemblywoman, Barbara Wright and Assmeblyman Paul R. Kramer for their help in obtaining a \$10,000 NJ State Grant which has been used to refurbish the Ely House kitchen and to purchase the display cases for our many exhibits.

So, as the Society begins its new year, I feel proud to be your President going into the year 2000! I hope this forthcoming year can be as exciting as this past year has been. Shirley Olsen

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The following preamble and resolutions was passed and signed by board: Whereas Edward T. R. Applegate Esqr through the earnest solicitation of the president and directors of the Central Bank of N.J. has accepted the office of cashier of said institution, thereby assuming the responsibilities attached to the same, and whereas through the delinquency of R. E. Morrison, Jos. S. Ely & the former officers of said institution, the assets have in all probability suffered a loss to an amount exceeding one hundred thousand dollars. Be it resolved that the responsibility devolving on the said E.T.R. Applegate is to be limited by and commensurate only with the pecuniary affairs of the said bank as it existed at the time he accepted the office and that he is not to be held liable directly or indirectly for any loss or depreciations that have arisen or may hereafter arise in the assets of said corporation owing to the misconduct of the old officers of said corporation against whom suit is now pending in the Court of Chancery of N.J. ..."

From the above, we now know that a law suit was filed against certain unnamed former officers of the bank. The amount of money missing is a considerable amount of purchasing power for that period of time. If that file on the lawsuit could be found, it could possibly answer many questions that the community had in 1858 but apparently were never resolved based upon the lack of newspaper articles. As a researcher, I went to the New Jersey State Archives to see if any files may still exist for this case. All that I knew to ask for, which was very little, was that the bank supposedly had filed a suit. Therefore, I requested the Archives to ask for a search of the records of the New Jersey Chancery Court regarding any case filed in 1858 which involved the Central Bank of New Jersey as Complainant and Robert E. Morrison et al as Defendants. I was told by my Archive associates, "No problem. If it exists, should be here in a couple of days." Sure enough, a file was located, shipped

## REVEREND MORRISON

to the Archives, and I was notified to come in to review it. The file, Docket #S-8-39-95, was simply a pile of documents, folded so tightly that they could not be fully opened for a thorough examination. The documents in the files began in 1858 and ended, ten years later, in 1868! Yet, apparently, no one outside of the bank was told anything. What was the dark secret?!

Let's get back to 1858, as one local paper was turning up the heat and giving hints as to what the bank's problems might be. The following article appeared in the *Hightstown Excelsior* of September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1858: "We understand that the directors of this institution contemplate moving their banking house to the building lately purchased by them now occupied by P. F. Slack. The rapidly increasing business demands larger accommodations than the present location affords, besides, we suppose that the unpleasant odor that hangs around the old building caused by former unprofitable financial experiments can be eradicated by a removal. If the old concern is evacuated by the officers, we understand it is the intention to thoroughly fumigate (sic) every corner and sell it for a brokers office, it being well calculated for that business."

The fact that there actually were problems within the bank is further indicated in the bank's minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1858: "The following resolution was unanimously passed, Resolved, That the act of E.T.R. Applegate, cashier of this institution in refusing to pay the assessment on life insurance of Philum Pink[?], and also the action of discount committee, in refusing to pay any more more (sic) money on life insurance of E. Broun be approved by this board. They both being considered worthless by us, and as we believe were both procured by the late president, unauthorized by the then directors; we, therefore repudiate the whole transaction, and declare the act of the late president, in paying money on said policies,

as an open violation of his office, and for the money so taken, indebted to this institution ..."

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1858, the minutes commented briefly on the lawsuit "... The [present] president was authorized to let the defendants in the suit late brought by bank examine the books in presence of Mr. Kingman ..." And, the minutes on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1859, reflect that James M. Cubberley was elected by the bank as Cashier for \$750 per year. [Cubberley was to become a crucial witness for the bank in this mystery. He and his family lived in the Ely House next to what would become the new location of the Central Bank of New Jersey, located on the now vacant lot next to Ely House on the corner of what is now Bank Street.]

The following article appeared in the *Hightstown Excelsior*, dated the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1859: "The annual meeting of the stockholders of this institution, was holden on Monday last. The following gentlemen were elected directors: Benjamin Reed, Isaac Pullen, George Hunt, Edward C. Taylor, Cornelius Wyckoff, James D. Robbins, Isaac Norton, James A. Reed, R.M. Job. The report showed that the bank had earned over nine per cent, besides paying expenses. A rather warm debate was had concerning the peculations (sic) of the late officers, and a disposition was manifested to try the California code on them which we were informed would have been carried out if the Reverend one had not wisely kept scarce. At a meeting of the new board of directors, Benjamin Reed was elected president, Edward C. Taylor was appointed secretary, James M. Cubberley Cashier, E.T. R. Applegate, Teller, Edward C. Taylor, Isaac Norton and R.M. Job Discount Committee. We understand that the stockholders have readily come forward to pay in their assessment and heartily approve the action of the directors in presecution (sic) the late officers."

**[To be continued in the January/February Issue]**

## THE FIRST MAIL CARRIER

19 April 1883 - "Charles Sutton, of Cape May, is the owner of a dog which every week is sent up to East Creek, a village in the upper end of Cape May county, nearly twenty-five miles distant, with letters tied upon his neck, which he delivers to the family of Mr. Sutton's son. He started up in the morning and after receiving a good dinner, returns during the night with replies. He was raised on the farm to which he is sent."

## STONAKER PORTRAITS DONATED TO SOCIETY

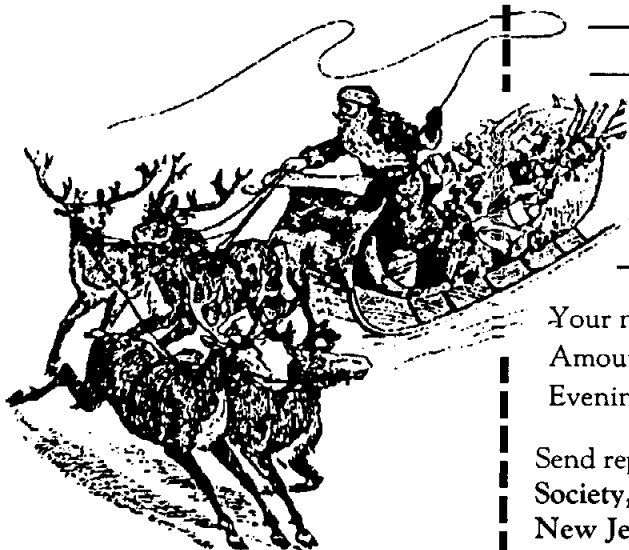
Shirley Olsen, president, thanks Bud Perrine and his family for donating the portraits of Matthew Stonaker and his wife Elizabeth (Farr) Stonaker to the Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society. The portraits were painted ca. 1860, by James Marlatt, a Hightstown artist, shortly after their wedding on 2



*Shirley Olsen, President, accepts the donated portraits from Alva "Bud" Perrine.*

January 1856. They were donated on behalf of Mr. Perrine's late wife, Jane (Puglin) Perrine, who obtained the pictures from her grandmother, Jane (Stonaker) Puglin.

# The Holiday Greeting Card



Each year at this time, the Society sponsors a Holiday Greeting Card, which is one of the ways we hope to spread a little good cheer during the holidays.

To cover our costs and to raise needed revenue for the Society, we ask our subscribers to contribute a small amount for their names to be inscribed on the card.

The monies received for the Greeting Card help in meeting our regular expenses.

Please contribute \$12 for an individual name and \$15 for a family. Checks may be made payable to H.E.W.H.S.

To have your name(s) added to the Holiday greeting card, please list your names (as you would like them to appear) on the form below.

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Evening phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send replies by December 1st to **Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society, c/o Dr. Harold C. Cox, Jr., 183 E. Ward Street, Hightstown, New Jersey 08520.** Please be sure to include your full return address and write "Holiday Card" on the envelope.

## RICHARD "DICK" REEVES' INDEXING PROJECT

As many of you know by now, Richard "Dick" Reeves, a longtime member of the Society, passed away recently. He worked for many years at the Trenton Municipal Library. What many of you don't know is that Dick used his many years of library expertise to index the *Windsor Hights Herald* as a past-time. He spent many hours indexing by hand the proper names in important articles and then separately indexing the subject-matter of the articles into specific categories. When I learned of his project, we discussed it and he wondered if it would be of any value to the Society. Naturally, I said yes and in 1995 and 1996, Dick gave a portion of his project to me for possible computerization. Although, I was not able to begin the computerization, his work was placed in the Society's Library. Thanks to Dick's efforts, the index has been used many times to re-

spond to letters of inquiry to the Society regarding both people and past events.

Now, that Dick is gone, we need someone to continue this worthy project; perhaps starting indexing from this day forward. If anyone is interested in working on this project, please contact Kate Middleton of our Library Committee.



## NOVEMBER PROGRAM SET FOR MEADOW LAKES

The Society's program, "History of Hightstown's Paper Money", is set for the 18<sup>th</sup> of November at Meadow Lakes at 7:30PM. The speaker, Chris Gould, will give a summary of paper money in the United States running from colonial times to the present Federal Reserve System. Of local interest, he will discuss Hightstown's early issues (bank and private), Hightstown Borough's Civil War issues, and Hightstown's National Bank Note Issues.

Gould was born and raised in Houston, Texas and graduated from the University of Texas with a BSEE degree. He is a lifetime member of the American Numismatic Association and has been a member of the organization for over 25 years. He has been a member of the International Bank Note Society since 1974 and is a past Board member of the East Windsor Township Preservation Commission.

**Hightstown-East Windsor  
Historical Society**  
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