

HIGHTSTOWN



EAST WINDSOR

NEW

JERSEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2001

St. James A.M.E. Church Hightstown, N.J.

by Richard S. Hutchinson

The St. James A.M.E. Church, of Summit Street, Hightstown, New Jersey, has a long historical standing and presence within our community. Its origins were present in the community prior to the building of the first church on the present site on Summit street.

We can learn a little more about the origins of the church through an article on the 6th of February 1868, where the *Hightstown Gazette* reported that: "The African M.E. Church will be located on Summit street, near the Rail Road crossing, a lot having been purchased of Rev. R.E. Morrison for that purpose. --- It is

but natural and reasonable that the colored population should desire a place to worship for themselves, and it would be praiseworthy in the community to assist them in the prosecution of so laudable an enterprise."

The funds for the construction of the building were obtained, the building materials purchased and the construction of the church was ready to begin in 1869. On 21 October 1869, the corner stone was laid and the following information was reported:

"Corner Stone Laying - The corner stone of the African M.E. Church,

on Summit St., was laid with appropriate ceremonies on Sabbath afternoon. Presiding Elder Grimes officiated, assisted by other clergymen. The following is a list of articles deposited in the stone:

Holy Bible; Discipline and Hymn book of the church; Minutes of the 12th General and last Annual Conference; List of the officers of the church; List of the officers of the borough of Hightstown; Copy of the church organ - *The Christian Recorder*; Copy of the *Hightstown Gazette*; Specimens of U.S. currency.

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Speaker Set For Annual Dinner Meeting

On January 21st, 2001, at 1:30 p.m., at the Coach & Four Restaurant, Rt 33, Hightstown, New Jersey, Jane Peters, well-known speaker of Civil War topics, will be the featured speaker at the Annual Dinner meeting of the Hightstown - East Windsor Historical Society.

Ms. Peters loves the art of researching her subjects and considers herself an amateur Civil War historian. She is affiliated with both the 26th and 28th Pennsylvania Volunteers and is a member of the New Jersey Civil War Heritage Association. Her programs have been well received by such groups as the Civil War Brotherhood, the D.A.R., and G.A.R. Civil War Museum; to name but a few.

She was recognized by the Delaware Valley Civil Round Table for her prestigious 1997 Merit Award.

Ms. Peters has selected one her favorite topics, "Civil War Nurses", for our annual dinner meeting. During her presentation, she will be attired in the uniform of a Civil War nurse. With some 20 years experience as a Civil War re-enactor with the 28th Pennsylvania Volunteers, she is certain to present a most dynamic program.

All friends of the Hightstown East Windsor Historical Society and members of the community are most welcome to attend our Annual Banquet.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

- 8 Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Ely House
- 21 Annual Banquet, 1:30 p.m., Coach & Four Restaurant

FEBRUARY

- 4 Business Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Ely House
- 15 Meadow Lakes Meeting Room - Weyman O. Steengrafe - "The American Presidency"

Errata

[Editor's Note] - Due to an oversight on my part prior to printing the November-December issue, a few words were dropped from the "Editor's Note" on Page 3. The entire item should read as follows: "Jacob Stults recalled Appleget as a friend and stated that in 1849: 'He was then engaged in the dry goods and grocery business with his brother, at the stand more recently occupied by the late Alfred Perrine. The brother died soon after my return to Hightstown, and after his death the business was conducted for a time by Appleget & Morrison.'"

St. James A.M.E. Church

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When depositing the last article the Elder remarked that it was customary on such occasions to deposit coins, but as they had not seen gold or silver for a long time, they were forced to use currency as a substitute. This gentle hint brought out quite a shower of specie for deposit. The reverend gentleman then made a brief but eloquent plea for help and the sum of \$75.00 was deposited in the hat.

We understand that the lumber for the church has already been purchased and the work of erection contracted for, so that the building may be speedily completed. The enterprise of this church in working so earnestly for a place of worship is not only commendable, but deserving of liberal assistance from all of our citizens."

The church building was finished by the end of 1869 and on the 23rd of December, the *Gazette* reported that: "The A.M.E. Church, on Summit St., was dedicated on Sabbath last, Bishop Campbell presiding. The new building is a neat edifice, 20 by 30 ft. Quite a number of the citizens of the borough were present, and assisted liberally in raising funds in liquidating the debt on the building. Bishop Campbell preached in the afternoon, on 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us'; a sermon that was acknowledged by the audience to be remarkable for natural eloquence, forcible expression, and a good command of the language."

At the present time, the original building of 1869 has been replaced with a new church building but the whereabouts of the contents of the original church's cornerstone, set in place in 1869, are not presently known by the pastor of the St. James A.M.E. Church. It would be great if those items existed, could be found and put out for display for both the members of the church and the community.

The following items are some further, but not all, references to the church that I have found in the *Gazette* regarding the Church's activities over the past 130 years.

21 July 1870 - The members of the Hightstown African M.E. Church will hold a Harvest Home on August 4th, in the woods of Stephen Bronaugh, for the benefit of the church.

7 April 1881 - The ladies of the St. James A.M.E. church will give a concert in the church next Wednesday evening, April 13th, for the benefit of the pastor. The admission is only 15 cents. Give them a full house.

25 July 1895 - A harvest home will be held in Association Park next Wednesday under the auspices of St. James A.M.E. Church. There will be good speaking by prominent colored divines and music by a first class brass band. The harvest home will take the place of the camp-meeting which the St. James Church has been in the habit of holding

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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

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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

St. James A.M.E. Church

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annually in Taylor's Grove. All are invited.

16 July 1896 - John Muse and Miss Matilda P. Taylor were married at the A.M.E. Church parsonage on Saturday, July 4th, by Rev. B.A. Murray.

Camp meetings of the St. James A.M.E. Church, Hightstown, will be held at Taylor's Grove, on Sundays - July 26th, Aug 2nd and Aug 9th.

15 April 1897 - Charity is the greatest thing in the world, but it is one of the most peculiar. Hundreds of dollars are raised in this town annually for foreign missions, and yet today one of our own churches is trying to raise \$140 to pay its own debts, and with little chance of success perhaps the people of Hightstown have done as liberally as they can for the church in question, but really the cause seems a good one. They

are a handful of colored people who call themselves the St. James A.M.E. Church. They seem to be earnest and conscientious, but they are poor. Their pastor is a hard-working, brave and faithful servant for the little flock. He is fighting a hard fight for his church and does it without complaint and with little help. The obstacles he faces would dishearten men less earnest and less determined. His salary is \$300 per annum. During the past year he has received less than \$125. During the last three months he has lived on exactly \$14.80. With this he has purchased everything he has had from salt to coal, and has paid his bills. In order to economize on fuel he abandoned one stove this winter and prepared his sermons in his kitchen. If that sort of thing happened several thousand miles away it would look like self-denial and heroism. As it is the mortgage will probably go unpaid.

The grand rally of the St. James A.M. E. Church, which took place in the Methodist Episcopal Church last Sunday, raised \$75. We ask the friends to help us raise \$75 more. We thank the friends for their kindness - B.A. Murray, Pastor.

22 April 1897 - Rev. C.G. Roberts, a retired missionary to Africa, will lecture in the Baptist Church, next Tuesday night, on "The Marriage Relation." The proceeds will go to the St. James A.M.E. Church, no admission will be charged but a collection will be taken. All are invited.

2 June 1898 - Rev. F.S. Cox, the new minister of the A.M.E. Church, is proving very popular, not only with his own congregation, but with those outside whom he has met. He is the brother of Miss Hannah Cox, who formerly resided in Hightstown.

Join today,
become a member!

Annual Membership (Jan. - Dec.)

Individual
Membership
\$15.00

Student
Membership
\$3.00

Family
Membership
\$20.00

ANNUAL BANQUET

Coach & Four Restaurant

Route 33, Hightstown, New Jersey
Sunday, January 21, 2001 • 1:30 p.m.



Menu

Entrees: (Please indicate number of entrees ordered)

\$17.00 _____ Chicken Francaise

\$17.00 _____ Norweigan Salmon Filet

\$17.00 _____ Top Sirloin of Beef

Send reservations with check payable to: "H.E.W. Historical Society" to:
Shirley Olsen, 6 Farr Ave., Hightstown, NJ 08520 (609-448-8388)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____

African-American Notes

Hightstown Gazette - 22 March 1883 - "We regret to learn of the death of Mr. John Paxton, a colored man, well known as a hard working and quiet citizen [of Hightstown]."

Hightstown Gazette - 29 March 1883 - "The life of Mr. John Paxton, whose death we recorded last week, was quite a romantic one. He was born a slave and gained his freedom long before the war, by the use of his wits and his heels. Making his way to Jersey, he found a home with one of his race, and afterwards bound himself to Mr. Stephen Duncan. Very few of his neighbors were aware that he was of more than middle age but there is no doubt that he was nearly eighty. The colored man with whom he first found a home here was present at the funeral."

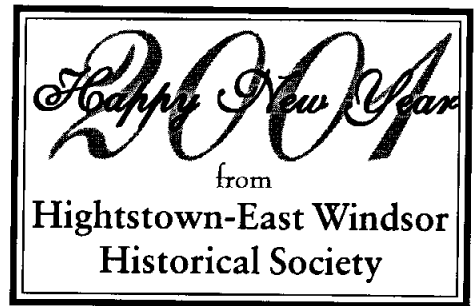
Hightstown Gazette - 16 March 1882 - "Dr. James Still (colored), resid-

ing in Medford, Burlington County, NJ, died Friday morning at the age of seventy years. Dr. Still was known throughout the country as the black cancer doctor. He had many wonderful cures."

Hightstown Gazette - 25 October 1894 - "Stephen Bronaugh, an old colored man who lived in Hightstown for many years, died at Trenton on Saturday. He was 80 years of age. Mr. Bronaugh was once a well-known character of this place, and will be remembered by every one as a quiet and kindly old man, who never wronged any one and enjoyed a reputation for integrity and piety than many a less humble citizen might well envy. His funeral was held on Tuesday evening at the residence of Francis T. Layton, at Trenton, and the remains were brought to Hightstown yesterday for interment."

Hightstown Gazette - Thurs. 4 Mar 1880 - "Rev. W.E. Stiles, pastor of the African M.E. Church of Bordentown, died last Wednesday. The funeral of his child took place in the morning and the minister's death occurred in the afternoon."

Hightstown Gazette - 23 Dec 1897 - "Mrs. Dinah Sutton, supposed to be the last of the slaves ever owned in New Jersey, passed her 105th birthday in her home in Paterson on Sunday. She was born at Conastonk Point, Monmouth county, on December 19th, 1792."



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

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