

HIGHTSTOWN



EAST WINDSOR

NEW JERSEY

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2003

## Speaker Set For Annual Dinner Meeting

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003, at 1:30 P.M. - 3:30 P.M., the Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society will hold its Annual Dinner Meeting. This year we will be returning to the Peddie Campus. Those attending last year's dinner on the campus loved the site and thoroughly enjoyed the meal prepared by the Peddie caterers. This year's meal will be a buffet dinner with wine and will be held again in the Longstreet Library building, which is located next to Kalamanthia House. The speaker this year will be John Fabiano, of the Battle of Monmouth 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Steering Committee.

Mr. Fabiano is the designated historian for the Borough of Allentown

and the President of the Allentown Upper Freehold Historical Society.



REPRODUCED FROM THE ALLIANCE

He will speak to us about "The Road To Monmouth", a project of the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Monmouth. This will be an interesting talk especially with the site of the battle being only a short distance from Hightstown. The 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event will be an excit-

ing time for this area with many events being planned for the routes that both the British and American forces took before the two armies clashed at the historic Battle of Monmouth. By attending, you will be able to learn more about the battle as well as information on the events being planned for the anniversary.

The Society invites all folks, both society members and non-members, who have a love of the history of the area to join us for a great meal, at a lovely setting, and to learn more about the events that helped form the community that we live in today. The cost of the program and meal is \$24 and all reservation checks should be made payable to "H.E.W. Historical Society" and sent to Shirley Olsen, 6 Farr Avenue, Hightstown, N.J. 08520 or by contacting her at 609-448-8388. ■

## More On Isaac Pearson

In the September - October 2002 issue was published, Part two of "Murder in Hightstown, 1776: The Death of Isaac Pearson", by Robert W. Craig, in which was mentioned the work of Joseph H. West and what he had to say regarding the incident involving the death of Isaac Pearson.

In December of 1891, the *Gazette* published part of West's work, "Story of the Revolution" regarding this incident: "Isaac Pearson was a prominent citizen of the original Burlington county. He was a grandson of Robert Pearson, who settled on the north bank of Crosswicks creek in 1681. Isaac's farm was at Pearsonville, on the road from Allentown to Trenton, and a large brick mansion is yet in a good state of preservation, was built by him just before the war of the revolution commenced. He was elected a member of the Assembly several times, and taking an active part in resisting the measures of the crown in the beginning of the struggle, was chosen a member of the Committee of Safety. But after the retreat of Washington's wreck of an army across the State, followed by the glittering and victorious British host, whose commander

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### JANUARY

- 6 7:30 p.m., Business Meeting, Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center
- 19 1:30 p.m., Annual Banquet, Longstreet Library, Peddie Campus

### FEBRUARY

- 3 7:30 p.m., Business Meeting, Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center
- 26 7:15 p.m., Charles S. "Cappy" Stults - a playlet about Hightstown in 1917, Meadow Lakes Meeting Room

# A Problem In Hightstown

by Richard S. Hutchinson

In the 1800s, there were always reports of numerous problems due to gentlemen having a wager and racing through town with their mode of transportation. The problem then was that it scared the animals wandering through the streets, the other wagon drivers and the pedestrians walking in the streets. A pedestrian not only had to cross the street by walking through deep ruts in the muddy unpaved streets, while dodging piles of fresh horse manure, but had to keep an eye out for racing horses and/or horse and wagons.

The racing also caused other horses in town to become frightened, become uncontrollable and race off careening through the streets, with or without their driver, and only coming to a stop after the wagon had either overturned, hit another object or had simply been smashed into kindling. It was continually being reported through the first quarter of the 1900s about the numerous people being injured by these runaways.

In the winter, it was no different, there was another speeding vehicle that caused problems in town and that was the horse-drawn sleigh. When it snowed, there were no street plows and the snow just mingled with the aforementioned materials in the street and you did the best you could trying to cross the streets. Everyone wanted to go to town in their sleigh to do their shopping or conduct their business when the ground was covered in snow. There was nothing like a horse silently moving through the snow covered countryside dressed in its best harness with fancy harness buttons and a strap of bells sounding out its steps while the occupants had a metal container of hot coals and a blanket for warmth.

Sleighting was a pleasant past-time in the community; I guess it was the modern equivalent of "cruising." Occasionally, the sleighting conditions would be reported in the local paper just like the weather. In my "mind's eye", I can see a horse and sleigh coming down Main street, Stockton Street or around the corner of Franklin at a good rate of speed and continuing right through the town with very little to hinder their speed. No traffic lights, stop signs and very little traffic, just the other sleighs and pedestrians going about their business. Many speeding sleighs in town were commented on in the papers during the winter months.

In January 1886, the local paper reported on the snow and the sleighting conditions:

"While the sleighting in town has been very good, the drifts along some of the roads have made traveling very bad. The man who deals in Sunday papers started to Princeton Junction after them on Sunday but was forced to return as the road was too badly blocked with snow for him to proceed. Even

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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

### Officers for 2002-2003

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

Typeset by Cori Hutchinson Quinlan  
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## Isaac Pearson

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issued proclamations offering pardon to those who would take an oath of allegiance, Pearson's heart failed, and like hundreds of others, he felt that the end was not far off.

Samuel Tucker, the State treasurer, gave way. The Rev. Wm. Tennent, in a dark moment, thinking that the welfare of his flock depended on it, was induced to take the oath of allegiance, an act which he soon after, ever after, bitterly regretted. If these and the many others could have foreseen the glorious victories at Trenton and Princeton, a few months later, nothing would have induced them to waver for a moment.

But during the gloomy period, when not a ray of hope was visible, Isaac Pearson concluded to take the oath of allegiance. His family were opposed to his taking this step, but he no doubt felt that it was his duty, and started on a fleet mare he owned.

He probably intended to go to New Brunswick by way of Allentown and Hightstown. When on the road a party of men pursued him, and reaching Hightstown, which was then a mere hamlet, he jumped from his horse and ran into a house on the main street and out the back door and started across the lot toward the cedar swamp which then filled the gully. The pursuers dashed after him through the house and firing at him as he sped across the field, he fell dead. The house into which he ran stood until about twenty-five years ago, and was for some years owned by the late Rev. John Segar.

Another tradition has that he was killed near Allentown, but a Hightstown tradition stated that a man was killed at the house mentioned during the revolution, and the above account is probably correct. His body was taken home for burial, and a coffin was made for him from the

boards taken from his unfinished barn. It was thought that those who slew him did so mere for the purpose of robbery than any other, as he was supposed to have had considerable money about him, the proceeds of a sale of his pork.

Years afterward, it is said, that a man living in the neighborhood of Allentown, being on his death bed, and who, it was thought, had been concerned in the shooting, being delirious, was heard to call the name of Isaac Pearson. Mr. Pearson left two children, one of whom married a sister of one of the little girls who sang and strewed flowers before Washington as he passed under the triumphal arch at Trenton, in 1780, and his descendants have been prominent and honorable people. The manner of his death was sad enough and the circumstances under which he met it made it a terrible shock to the family. ■

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**\$50.00**

## ANNUAL BANQUET



**Longstreet Library**

*Peddie Campus (next to Kalamathia House)*

*Hightstown, NJ*

*Sunday, January 19, 2003 • 1:30 p.m.*

*\$24.00 per person*

**Catered Special Buffet Menu**

*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: \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

# Racing In Hightstown

*Continued from page 2*

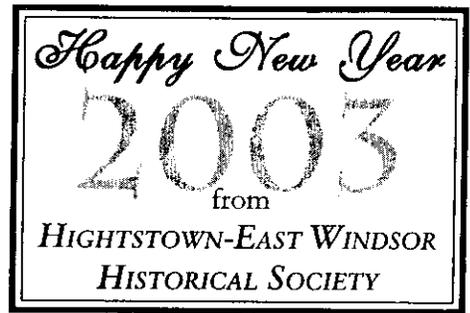
now it is said that some of the roads in the county near here are impassable.

If there is anything worse and more dangerous than a catching disease it is the catching on epidemic which is the present prevalent among small boys, with or without a sled. It is a marvel that more accidents do not occur from the habit of little fellows grabbing on the swift moving sleighs and running the risk of falling and being trampled under foot. It is right that the small boys should have all possible harmless fun out of the snow but parents should see that their little ones do not indulge in such a dangerous practice. Boys should not be allowed to catch on the 'woodies' and the like when the streets are crowded with horses and sleighs."

So, as you can see, even the children became involved when the sleighs came into town. They did then, rightfully or wrongfully, what I guess every kid has done at one time or another; hitched a ride.

[Editor's Note: As a kid growing up in Hightstown in the 1940s & 1950s, we would stand by the fire house, or anyplace where there was a stop sign, with our American Flyer sleds and wait for the trucks to stop. We would then sneak out behind the truck and hitch a ride by holding onto the back bumpers. A ride through downtown Hightstown would bring shouts and/or smiles from the people on the street either shouting for us to get off or just watching us go by. A ride down Main Street from the firehouse through town to the Hightstown Diner was considered a very good ride.

I can still remember my mother, my sister and I, on a sled tied onto the rear of my father's car as he rode on the back roads around Hightstown after a snow. Then along the dirt road next to the railroad tracks from Hightstown to Cranbury in the fresh snow on a cold, wintery night. I can't remember which was better; riding outside in the rumble-seat of the car while waiting my turn on the sled or riding on the sled. It was dangerous, cold and wet; but great fun!]



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

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