

# Historical Society News

**Hightstown-East Windsor  
Historical Society**  
164 North Main Street  
Hightstown, NJ 08520  
[www.hewhs.com](http://www.hewhs.com)

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Cranbury, NJ 08512-2010





## Library Update

During the past year, the Society library has grown with the addition of several collections and other small additions. One of the more interesting individual items is an autograph book kept between 1881 and 1884 by Blanche Ashton, a daughter of Hightstown storeowner Joseph Ashton. Blanche became the aunt of Grace and Dorothy Ashton, and the Society received this donation in April, following the program that Westminster Choir College performed in honor of Grace Ashton for her lifetime of music education. Here and there men's names appear in the book, but it is largely filled with the autographs and short inspirational messages from her female friends, whose names seldom appear in local records. We thank Barbara Walker for the donation.

This past spring, Frances Pane donated a copy of a paper that she wrote chronicling the move of her house from Disbrow Hill Road in 1981 and its subsequent rehabilitation at Hidden Springs Lane during the 1980s and afterward. Mark Lidtke of Hightstown donated a small group of photographs detailing the progress of demolition and construction of the Housing Authority apartments in Hightstown. The Society also received a collection of material of the Hageman family of Hightstown, some of which related to members of the family from Hunterdon and Somerset counties. Those portions of the collection have been transferred to their respective county historical societies. Perhaps of broadest interest is the Stonaker photograph collection (described separately.)



*Dredging Peddie Lake, 1984.*  
Stonaker Collection

### COVER PHOTO

*Hedy's Bar, on Mercer Street, before Urban Renewal. Ca.1961*  
Photo donated by: Mark Lidtke

The Library's overall reorganization continues to proceed slowly. The balance of the Kathryn Dennis collection, which was transferred to the library in 2016, remains unprocessed, but will be reboxed soon. It will be added to the bulk of the Dennis collection, which was received in 2009. Additional library supplies are on order and will enable this work to be done. The library's chief long-term need remains for new shelving of the proper size and type to augment or replace the current shelving, which was designed more for books than for collections of manuscripts and similar material. We are also in need of updating our scanner/copier and our computer as digital records are becoming more important.

### **Monthly Meetings**

Anyone is welcome to attend our meetings. We discuss progress of each committee and welcome your input for new ideas and offers to assist with our upcoming programs.

**Meetings are held:**  
The first Monday of the month at 7:00 pm in Ely House. 164 North Main Street, Hightstown.

### **CORRECTION:**

IN TWO PASSAGES ON PAGE 5 OF THE LAST ISSUE, IN THE ARTICLE ABOUT VILLAGE NURSERIES, THE FATHER OF WALTER C. BLACK WAS IDENTIFIED AS JOSEPH BLACK. IT SHOULD HAVE READ JOSEPH H. BLACK (BROTHER OF CHARLES BLACK).

# President's Message

## DEAR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

We have added this additional Newsletter issue to provide updates on Society activities prior to the last, larger, full-color newsletter which will be the third and final part of our "East Windsor at 220" series. Scheduling difficulties have made this necessary, but we expect to complete our East Windsor series with the Winter 2017/18 issue. And there will be many more East Windsor stories to come in future issues.

The Society is in need of additional volunteers. The facility is being used by a historical group on October 21st and 22nd. We would love to have the program video-recorded for our archives. If anyone has equipment and some time, please contact me and I'll provide additional information. We are planning work days on October 14th and November 18th, to prepare the Freight Station and Ely House for the October events and the holiday activities. Shoot me an email if you are able to participate. We will start at 9 am and go until whenever. You do not have to be there the entire day.

The work will include light dusting but also rearrangement of some displays. We will also select a few items from our collections to place on display. There are many great items to look at in our library and we need to share them more often.

Remember the antique show on October 26th. For a small fee you can bring in an item or a number of items and get a professional's valuation. More information is in this newsletter.

Finally, thank you all that have paid your 2017 dues and those who have made special contributions in memory of love ones and friends. Let me hear from you if you can volunteer or have any questions. [cstults@allenstults.com](mailto:cstults@allenstults.com). 609-443-6864 is my home phone, 800-792-8660 daytime.

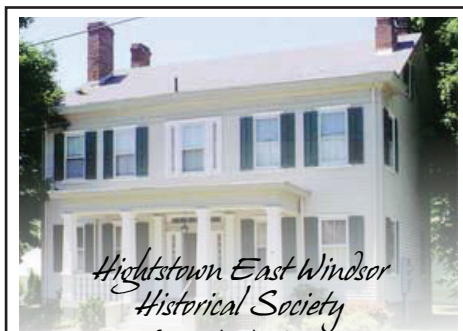
Cappy Stults, President

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## Editor's Column

In September 1967, a Hightstown High School freshman piled into the back seat of a social studies teacher's car and went with her and a few other students on a site visit to see three historic properties. He was hooked. From that afternoon forward he knew he wanted to use his interest in history to help save old buildings. By the time you read this, it will be 50 years since that day, when he could not know that his interest would blossom into a career, or that that career, nearly all of it, as a professional architectural historian, would be spent in New Jersey. That young kid was me, I'm still here, and I still marvel at my good fortune.

AUTUMN 2017



*Hightstown East Windsor  
Historical Society*  
founded 1971

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

### *Officers for 2016-2017*

President- Charles "Cappy" Stults  
609-448-0110 [cstults@allenstults.com](mailto:cstults@allenstults.com)  
Vice President- Robin Smith  
Recording Secretary- Shirley Olsen  
609-448-8388  
Corres. Secretary- Vacant  
Treasurer- Robert Szychowski  
609-448-9490

### *Committee Chairs*

Finance- Robert Szychowski  
609-448-9490  
Property & Grounds- Warren Olsen  
609-448-8388  
Beverly Mann  
Library- Robert Craig  
609-592-2345  
Website- Gary Stevens  
609-469-1860  
Membership- Cookie Cummings  
[cookcumplings@yahoo.com](mailto:cookcumplings@yahoo.com)  
Museum- Cookie & Christa Cummings  
Newsletter- Robert Craig  
609-592-2345  
Programs- Christian Kirkpatrick &  
Jane Cox  
609-443-3138  
Programs- Nancy Laudenberger  
609-443-6536  
Publicity- Shirley Olsen  
609-448-8388

### *Building Committee*

Christian Kirkpatrick, Shirley Olsen,  
Warren Olsen, Robert Szychowski

### *Society Trustees*

Nancy Laudenberger, Bonnie  
Lou Field, Warren Olsen & Irene  
Schubert

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## *Antique Show & Tell Comes to Hightstown*

The Society is pleased to announce that it will sponsor an Antique Show & Tell on Thursday, October 26th at 5 p.m. The event will take place in the Sara Hutchinson West Educational Center (formerly the town's railroad freight station), located directly behind Ely House, at 164 North Main Street in Hightstown. The event will be a fund-raiser for the Society's Museum and Library programs.

Gene Pascucci, owner of Empire Antiques, at 278 Monmouth Street, Hightstown, will be on hand to place a value on items brought in from the community. A donation of \$15 will be for the first item that he appraises, and each additional item will be \$5. Pascucci recommends that if an item is too heavy or large to bring in, that owners take photos of the item and measure the size of the piece, and he will try to work with that information.

Gene has been in the antiques industry for 42 years, and is highly regarded as an appraiser. He has located his business in Hightstown for the past 21 years.

## *Society Receives Stonaker Photographs*

The Society has received a donation of the Stonaker family photograph collection, a remarkable assemblage of images of Hightstown and East Windsor people, activities, and scenes, most of which are unduplicated in our other photographic collections. They include many never-before displayed images, assembled by three generations of the Stonaker family of Hightstown. Both Harold G. Stonaker and his son, Lewis Stonaker, Sr., were airplane pilots, and the collection contains numerous aerial photographs--low-level and oblique, of scenery in the township and Borough, and of some areas beyond. One shows the fire that followed the early 1950s explosion of the "Unexcelled" Munitions Company plant in Cranbury Township.

Most images were taken from the 1930s through the 1950s, and they include scenes of parades, and varied activities including stock car racing and scenes at the short-lived Hightstown airport on Airport Road. A sizeable group within the collection is of downtown Hightstown businesses and of general views of downtown Hightstown, some of which were taken from locations and looking in directions seldom photographed. One important piece is an original 19th-century print of an image of the Hightstown sawmill, annotated on the back by local builder Albert Norton. This photo predates the demolition of the sawmill in 1887. The collection also includes a group of Stonaker family portrait photos, including of Harold Stonaker's grandparents.



*A Hightstown High School dance, 1953. The backdrop suggests that the dance was commemorating the 100th anniversary of Hightstown Borough's incorporation.* - Stonaker Collection

## *Annual Dinner - Save the Date*

Planning has already begun for the 2018 Annual Dinner and annual meeting. With successful dinners this year and last, we are planning for either the last Sunday in April or the first Sunday in May. Please keep these dates available. Details will be announced as plans firm up. We hope to see you there.

## Look! The Society is on Facebook

Technology is changing everyday and so are we. Did you know we have our own Facebook page? The Hightstown-East Windsor Historical Society posts weekly entries letting the public know the activities we are planning and sharing historical stories of our towns. Like our page and enjoy and engage yourself in our rich history.

Being a member helps our Society in many ways. Your dues provide funds for programs, newsletter publications, maintenance of Ely House, our headquarters, with the original Hightstown Railroad freight station attached. Come join us and be a part of your community.



*Servicing a bus used in the Trenton-Hightstown-New Brunswick route. Probably early 1950s. - Stonaker Collection*

## Christmas Tea - 2017

The Society Christmas Tea will be held on Sunday, December 10, 2017, from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. Society ladies will be serving punch and cookies in the dining room. Please call Shirley Olsen at 609-448-8388 if you would be willing to be a hostess for the afternoon. The "Hights-Tones", a choral group from Hightstown High School, under the leadership of Charlie Ernst, will be singing from 2 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. as one of the highlights of the afternoon. Joanne Brogus and Marion Rock will be selling holiday evergreen centerpieces to benefit the historical Society. A holiday boutique with hand-made Christmas items made by women of the First Presbyterian Church will also be available for sale.

Following the tea, the Hightstown Woman's Club is sponsoring their biennial Christmas House Tour. Five private homes will be open on tour from 3- 6 p.m. Several of our very own members will have their homes on tour: The homes to be toured this year are: Woody and Lynne Wallace, Ron and Eileen Couturier, Richard and Eva Teller, Dave and Irene Schubert, Trish and Dennis Egan. Proceeds from the house tour will be donated to the Society as well as other woman's club charities. Tour Tickets will be available during the Society tea for \$15. For more information about the house tour, contact Shirley Olsen, chairman of the tour.

AUTUMN 2017

## Membership ~Application~

**Support us this year at  
the following rates:**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual        | \$20  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family            | \$25  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Booster           | \$40  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining        | \$50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life (Individual) | \$200 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life (Family)     | \$275 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter ONLY   | \$10  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you hear about membership?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail the completed application  
along with a check payable to:

**HEW Historical Society  
Membership Committee  
164 North Main Street  
Hightstown, NJ 08520**

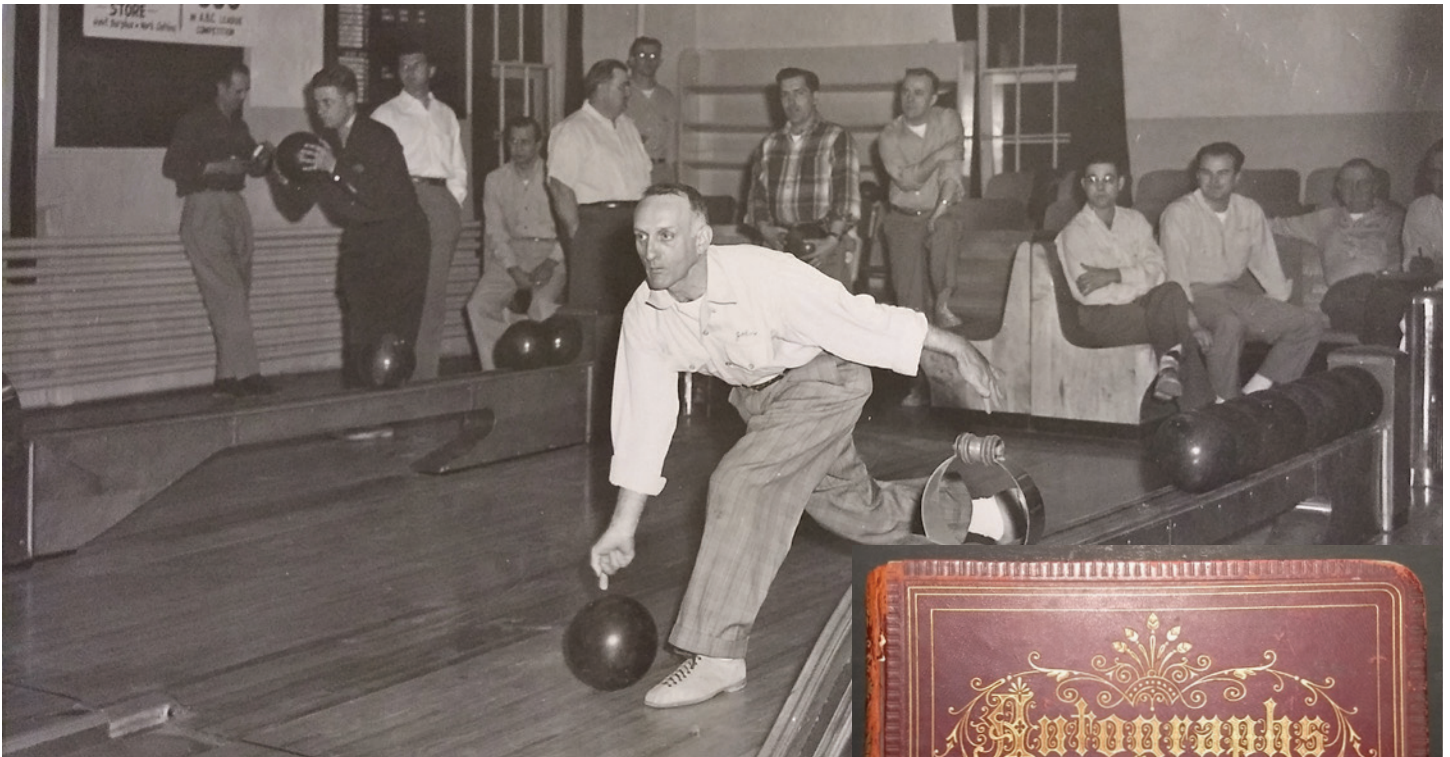
- I would not like to be part of  
the New Member Spotlight.

## Volunteer Opportunities

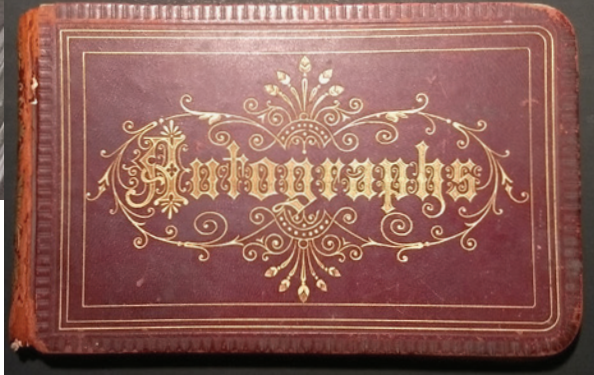
I would like to volunteer to help out  
with the following committee(s):

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property & Grounds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Museum             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programs           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity          |

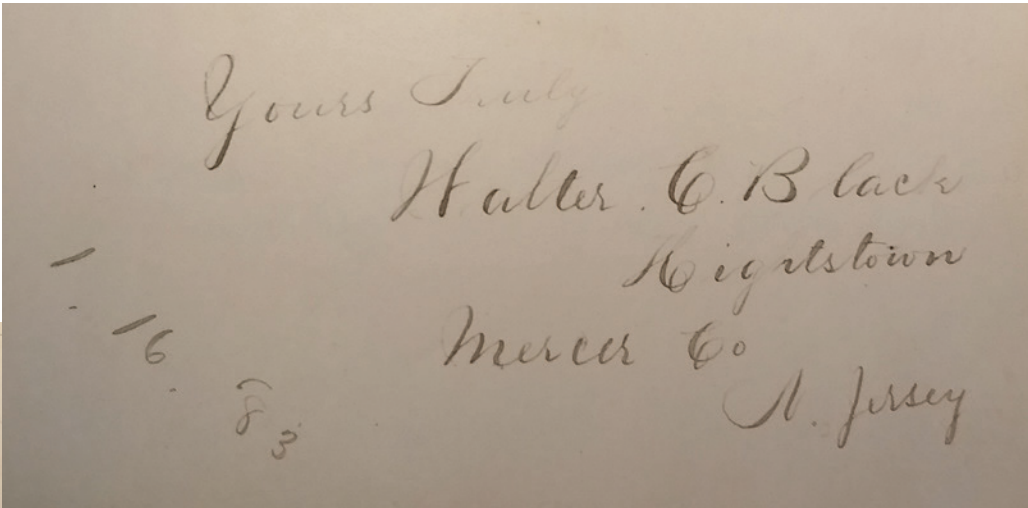




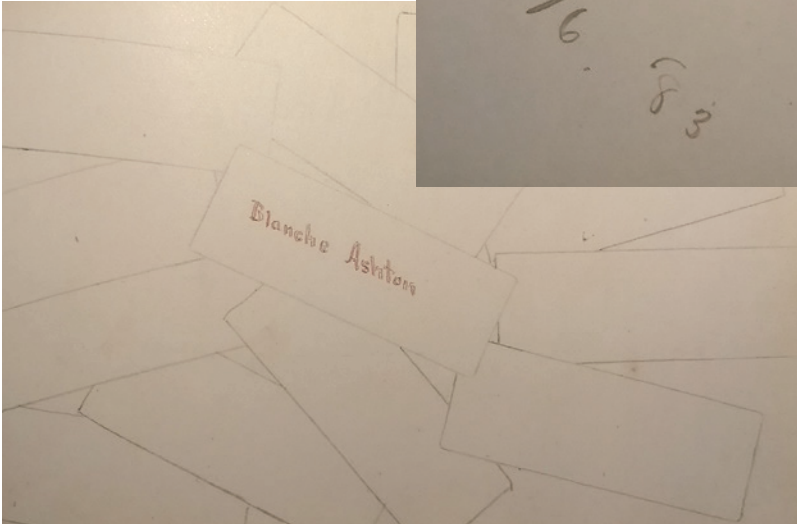
A group bowling at the Hightstown Lanes, 1952.  
- Stonaker Collection



Blanche Ashton's autograph book, 1881-84.



Walter C. Black, who would later run Village Nurseries, signed Ashton's autograph book.



Ashton left her mark on the autograph book.