

# ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

SPRING 2024

## *Accessions Confessions!*

*By Cindy Mason-Purdie*

What a fantastic and wide range of materials flow to (get piled by) the accessions desk at the Atlantic County Historical Society. Each and every donated item is “accessioned” - meaning, in simple terms, it's given an identification number and input into PastPerfect computer software along with any information that arrived with the donation of the item. That information includes who donated it and (hopefully) identifying information about the item - what is it, where's it from, who owned it, what does it relate to, and who is it?! I confess to be particularly saddened by the number of unidentified photographs that come across the desk.

In the past, all of this information was handwritten into journal books and this task remained so until the Society began its computerized collection program about 20 years ago. A multitude of volunteers were then required to read and input into the computer all the handwritten accessions since the Society's inception in 1913. A Herculean task! I confess to not knowing the exact number but the current collection of Atlantic County Historical Society is estimated to hold more than 60,000 items.

After accessioning, the next step for each donated item is to get “cataloged.” Within the PastPerfect software there are four catalog areas in which to place an item: archives, library, photographs, and museum. There are a few steps to the cataloging process but probably the most important is location, location, location. What good are those 60,000 items if you can't find them? Books get a call # to assist in finding them on the shelf, just like a regular library. (However, the Society does not use the Dewey decimal system.) A photograph gets a “photograph file folder number” and is stored in the vault in a metal cabinet. An object would get a location in the museum that might be “on exhibit on table in the Victorian parlor” or its specific storage area e.g. “box 3 of 6 of maritime tools.”

One of the largest areas of the collection, the archives can contain everything from letters, deeds, pamphlets, maps, brochures, yearbooks, reports, postcards, program books, certificates, diplomas and so on. These can be filed in a variety of locations. Many are housed in collection boxes in the vault and the location might say: “vault - collection box #32, folder 5.” However, some materials are in the “vertical file” which is a set of filing cabinets in the main research area of the Society for easy access by visitors. The items located in the vault require the assistance of a Society volunteer. I confess to finding the photograph files in the vault quite fascinating and often spend a couple minutes doing random look-see. On any given day while the Society is open a visitor can come in and access almost everything in the library, archives and photographs. However, museum objects are not all on display. This is due to space constraints as well as the fragility of the item. From time to time the Society will create special exhibits to highlight different parts of the museum collection.

I confess to often giving in to the urge to stop and take the little adventures that can lead from a random little gem that finds its way to the accessions desk. For instance, recently a scrapbook of old obituaries included a Civil War veteran, John Harrold, of Atlantic City who died in May of 1892. The obituary mentions that he

*Continued on page 4*

# Events and Happenings

## Program Logistics

### RISLEY HOMESTEAD

8 Virginia Avenue  
(near 400 block of Shore Rd)  
Northfield, NJ



Saturdays & Sundays, 11am – 4pm

## Program Description

The [Risley Homestead](#) is one of two 18th century houses in Atlantic County individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was home to many generations of Risley oystermen. The ACHS received the Homestead and its furnishings by bequest from Virginia Risley Stout in 1989. The Homestead is open Saturday & Sunday for individual and small group guided tours. Contact ACHS for details about large groups.

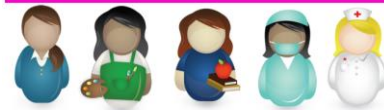
## Then & Now!

By Lynn Wood

*Then & Now* is a regular feature in our Newsletter, showcasing some of the photos in the ACHS collection.

In 1830 Samuel Richards bought about 200 acres of land in Mays Landing near the river, and in 1839 he built a hotel, originally to serve the workers of the Weymouth Iron Works, and near the court house and public offices. Transportation was very slow and exhausting in these early days of travel. The hotel was most likely a welcoming sight that provided a stable for horses, a warm bed and fireplace with fresh water in the wash stand and chamber pots available along with the outdoor privy. The hotel has been renovated several times, but we do know a few things about the original building. It still sits on its original foundation, a rectangular three and a half story stone and wood framed building with full basement measuring about 44 feet long and 46 feet wide. It had a one story open porch, 4 brick chimneys, and a widow's walk in the center of the roof. The first lessee was Colonel Richard Wescoat. The hotel was first known as the Samuel Richards Hotel or the Mays Landing Hotel. Congressman William Moore owned the hotel from 1864 to 1866 with John B. Champion after him. Champion built another hotel in the English Creek area and called this one the Americ Hotel and subsequently the Mays Landing hotel was also known as the American Hotel under Champion's ownership. Champion ran the hotel for 7 years then leased it to William Veal.

Through the years it changed ownerships and finally in 1981, there was groundbreaking for the Atlantic County Library with the hotel adjoining it. The hotel was restored and renovated as offices for the library thanks to the Hamilton Township Historic Commission and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



## More Fascinating Females!

Meet 16 more women who helped Atlantic County grow & prosper

**FREE EXHIBIT**

Thursday – Saturday, 10:00am - 3:00pm  
March 2 – April 6, 2024

ACHS, 907 Shore Road, Somers Point  
[atlanticcountyhistoricalsocietynj.org](http://atlanticcountyhistoricalsocietynj.org)  
(609) 927-5218 [achsinfo@comcast.net](mailto:achsinfo@comcast.net)

## Growing native plants in our gardens.



Local arborist Dave Parker will share his passion for native plants.

Join us for this FREE Program  
April 6, 2024 @1:00pm

Rutgers Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer questions.

ACHS, 907 Shore Road, Somers Point  
[atlanticcountyhistoricalsocietynj.org](http://atlanticcountyhistoricalsocietynj.org)  
(609) 927-5218 [achsinfo@comcast.net](mailto:achsinfo@comcast.net)

## Yard Sale

Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>  
8:00am – 2:00pm  
(Rain date, June 9<sup>th</sup>)  
and

Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>  
8:00am – 2:00pm  
(Rain Date: Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Many items for sale, including extra Library books. All proceeds benefit the ACHS

Risley Homestead  
8 Virginia Avenue  
(near 400 block-Shore Rd)  
Northfield, NJ

## Member News

### 2023 HOLIDAY SWEET SALE SWEET SUCCESS!!



### **SPECIAL THANK YOU!...**

goes to Sue and Mike Jones of Allentown, PA and their daughter, Amy, who is married to our board member, Will Rozell. For at least the last six years, the Allentown Crew has baked for a day and a half and this year sent down 13 large trays of cookies. They are a major reason our event is SO successful. Will has tried to claim much of the credit for marrying into the right family and for delivery of the goodies to the Society building.....to no avail, however. ☺

# Welcome

### New Members

Milton Siglin, *Mays Landing, NJ*  
Robert Hackett, Jr., *Mt Arlington, NJ*  
Donna Lee Riegel, *Port Republic, NJ*



### DONATIONS

#### *Friend \$1 - \$49*

Milton Siglin, Paul Schopp, Jeff Amundsen

#### *Patron \$50 - \$249*

Jim & Lu Leeds, Charlie & Colleen Morgan,  
Anne Ronne: *In Memory of Dr Victor A Bressler,*  
General Lafayette Chapter DAR:  
*In Memory of Freda Heintz,*  
Will Rozell: *In Memory of Freda Heintz*

#### *Sponsor \$250 - \$1000*

Alan E Kligerman

#### *Benefactor \$1000 +*

Robert J Stiefbold,  
*In Memory of Joanne Stiefbold, former President*

### Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

Email: [ACHSinfo@comcast.net](mailto:ACHSinfo@comcast.net)

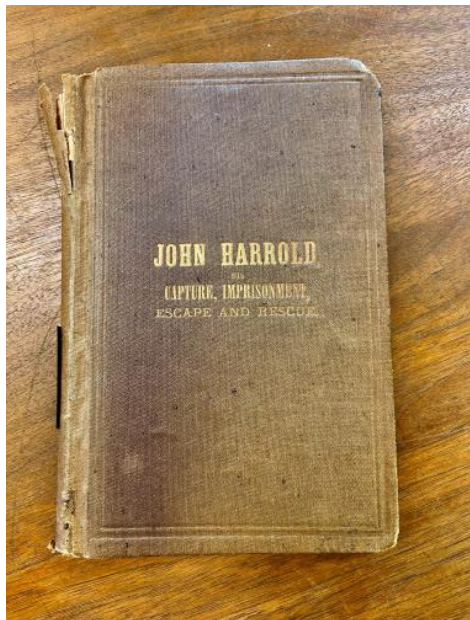
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website [www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org](http://www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org)

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Diane Miller, & Lynn Wood,

*The Atlantic County Historical Society received an operating grant  
from the Atlantic County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.*

## Accessions Confessions! *continued...*



published a book in 1870 about being a prisoner of war at, not one but, three of the more infamous Confederate prisons: Libby, Andersonville and Florence! I wondered if we had that book in our collection. I did indeed find the small, somewhat fragile book on the shelf. It was donated by Harriet Frambes, one of the founders of the Society, and accessioned in 1925. (In case the reader is intrigued, the book has been digitized and can be found online: <https://archive.org/details/libbyandersonvil00harr> or <https://digital.tcl.sc.edu/digital/collection/civilwar/id/2614>.) Looking beyond his period writing style, one has to marvel that this young local man, a shoemaker by trade, was able to survive so many terrible privations.

I confess to writing this in hopes that someone reading it might have their interest piqued and come join the crew at the Society. As Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot once remarked on the importance of regular thinking "If the little grey cells are not exercised, they grow the rust." I can report that no rust grows at the Society and - hint, hint - there's one more desk in the accessions room.



## Spotlight on the Shelves

*a treasure hiding in plain sight...*

by *Brittani Mazzone*

Just miles away from the storied leisetowne of Atlantic City, lies a formerly dense and diverse wooded region that has changed greatly since its early days: Egg Harbor Township. Originally part of Gloucester County until Atlantic County was carved out of it in 1837, Great Egg Harbor Township celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010. Ten municipalities have been created from the original area, beginning in 1854 with Atlantic City. Currently, Egg Harbor Township (EHT), is made up of eight informally-named sections, each holding its own rich historical significance: Bargaintown, Cardiff, English Creek, Farmington, McKee City, Scullville, Steelmanville, and West Atlantic City.

June Sheridan and Lynn Wood, long time and respected members of the Atlantic County Historical Society and the Great Egg Harbor Township Historical Society, published *Journey Through Time: A Pictorial History of Egg Harbor Township*, as a fundraiser for the GEHTHS. June was the brains behind the extensive research while Lynn was in charge of the photography. The book has even been turned into a DVD and a presentation that has been shown in schools throughout the community to not only educate, but also to stir up nostalgia among the residents.

Inside the pictorial, each section of the township has its own chapter, providing readers with before-and-after photos to accompany the written history. Some notable sections highlight the early settlement of Jefferies (Jeffers) Landing, Colonel John McKee who was considered the wealthiest African-American in the country at the time, the Zion United Methodist Church which held meetings even prior to the Revolutionary War, and English Creek Grist Mill that served as an epicenter for early development.

When Lynn was asked about her personal connection to the topic, she mentioned her father's successful amusement park established in 1959 known as Adventure Village. Lynn realized that many residents were unaware of the area's transformation from a farming and shipbuilding town to the bustling community it is today. She emphasized the importance of conveying this information to younger generations, as our local old-timers continue to depart us, taking those memories with them.



**ATLANTIC  
COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

907 Shore Road  
Somers Point

**Saturdays:  
JULY 20<sup>th</sup> &  
AUGUST 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Inside and  
outside the  
ACHS.**

# Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

## Port Republic History – Cale Collection

*Editor's Note: The following transcription is much shortened from a 15-page article found in the ACHS Historical File, Cale Collection, R-2.2. Because so much was excluded for space consideration, the full article is well-worth reading as it is Cale's version of Port Republic history from about 1772 to the 1930s.*

*Though the author doesn't give his full name, his essay tells us that he lived in Port Republic until he was 12 years old, probably in the late 1800s, and his grandfather was Rollin M. Ashley (1827-1911), who kept a general store there. Knowing this relationship, this transcriber thinks that it's highly likely that the author was a child of Rollin's daughter Julia Ashley, who married Joseph A. Cale in 1874.<sup>i</sup> Taking it a step further, the author might have been Julia's son, Rollin Ashley Cale of Pleasantville, whose death in September 1934 garnered front page headlines in the Ventnor News – "Honored Citizen...Passes Away with Heart Attack, Ardent Booster of the Community."<sup>ii</sup> Ironically, this article was probably written in 1934, the year of his death.*

*The typescript's irregular spelling, punctuation and capitalization have been largely retained. Information in brackets was added by this transcriber.*

The City of Port Republic, [with its] many unofficial [names, has been] known as "Blackmans Mills", "Gravelly Landing", "Uniontown", "Watery Hollow", "Hewittown", "Clarkstown", "Swan Bay", "Doleferry Hill", "Wrangleboro", "Chestnut Neck" etc. [It] is situated at the head of Nacote Creek a tributary of the Mullica River [formerly] Galloway Township, Old Gloucester County now Atlantic County since 1837. Prior to the Revolutionary War, Port Republic was a thinly settle[d] section of woodland between the large village of Clarks Landing on the upper Mullica and Chestnut Neck the largest port of entry along the New Jersey coast between Sandy Hook and Cape May. Just prior to the Revolution Patrick McCollum and Micajah Smith obtained a charter from the King of England to construct a dam above (Indian Landing) upper Nacote Creek and also to erect a saw mill and a grist mill. This was in the year 1772.<sup>iii</sup> Soon after this work was completed (Gravelly Landing) or Port Republic became quite an industrial village, several shipyards were in operation, much lumber, furs, farm products and charcoal were shipped to Philadelphia and New York markets by boats which made regular trips. On the return trips manufactured goods, hardware, clothing and mail made the cargo.

The community Tavern which appeared to be a public necessity of the time was kept by Daniel Mathis of Chestnut Neck, this tavern was destroyed, along with the dwelling at that place, during the attack by the British Oct. 6, 1778. After the destruction of the tavern at Chestnut Neck Daniel Mathis built a brick tavern at (Gravelly Landing) known as "Franklin Inn"<sup>iv</sup> the contractor was Jonas Miller a young artisan who later married a daughter of Daniel Mathis and subsequently became the proprietor of Franklin Inn. Miller also built what was known as the John Endicott house in 1795 which still remains in good condition it is located on the North side of Nacote Creek near the Port Republic bridge. Miller also constructed what was then termed a Mansion House for Nicholas Van Sant the dwelling was on the main road leading from Shore Road to Blackmans Pond...It was not until after the British attacked and burned Chestnut Neck and Clarks Landing that many of the homeless from both of these villages decided to make their homes at Port Republic being further inland from the river and less open for attack by the British. The Johnson and Collins families being about the only ones to rebuild at Chestnut Neck...Out of this transformation grew a very substantial citizenship made up of Blackmans, Endicotts, Clarks, Collins, Adams, Cakes, Ashleys, Johnsons, Penningtons, VanSants, Barnetts, etc. The Blackmans came from Bargaintown, Benjamin and Jacob Endicott from a ship wreck, Clarks from Clarks Landing, Johnsons from Chestnut Neck, VanSants from Burlington County, Ashleys from New York State etc.

Out of the efforts of these pioneer settlers grew a large village. The chief industries being ship building, cordwood, lumbering, burning of charcoal, farming, fishing, oysters, clams and salt hay. The Johnsons, Blackmans and Clarks became extensive land owners. The greater part of the Larnner Clark estate is still intact [c. 1934] covering the area on the South side of Nacote Creek between Beaver Run and John Browns Run and extending from Nacote Creek to the Moss Mill road \_\_\_\_\_ thousand acres. As many as five ship yards were in operation during and after the Revolutionary War. The last to survive was that of Samuel VanSant which ceased operation some seventeen years ago. The VanSant ship yard was in operation from 1888 to 1917...The last boat was a 40 foot pleasure launch finished by Will VanSant in 1917.

The Grist Mill and Saw Mill ceased operation many years prior to that time. The dam across Nacote Creek was built in 1774. The first bridge across Nacote Creek from the John Endicott house to the Lardner Clark estate was constructed in 1829...

*Continued on page 6*

## Looking Back through the Files.....continued

In 1869 the state legislators passed an act authorizing the construction of a bridge at Johnson's Landing but it was not built until 1922 when the route of the NY road was changed. The first bridge over the Mullica River was constructed about 1889 between Chestnut Neck and New Gretna...Port Republic was incorporated as a City in 1895 and Ralph Ashley son of David was its first mayor.<sup>v</sup> Prior to being incorporated as a City the residents of Port Republic found it necessary to travel to the township hall [Galloway Township] at Leeds Point to vote on election day. The present Port Republic church was founded in 1871 by the Revs. W. F. Randolph, John Collins, Jos. P. Cake, Lardner Clark, David S. Blackman, John W. Johnson, Oliver P. Hickman, Cornelius Garrison and Wm. A. Johnson...In the old Blackman cemetery many headstones inscriptions give silent memory of many of the old residents [It pains this transcriber to omit the many names and dates found here]...In the Union Cemetery, Moss Mill road we find records of our respected colored neighbors as follows Wm. Lee 24<sup>th</sup> U.S. colored troop d. 8-20-1895, Alexander Smith, Priv. Co. B 25<sup>th</sup> Reg. U.S. Col. Troop d. 2-23-1910, Josiah Boling Co. B 25<sup>th</sup> Reg. Col. Infantry d. 5-28-1909, Chas Boling Priv. Co. B. 25<sup>th</sup> Reg. N.J. Col. Troop d. 1918, Henry Boling b. 1871 d. 1894, Samuel Boling b. 1872 d. 1915. To Micajah Smith should be given credit for the growth of Port Republic it was his vision and initiation in building the dam to create water power for mills, which started the ship building industry which contributed so materially to the success of the Revolutionary cause, as well as furnishing employment for much of the local population. Micajah's success favored Nemiah [Nehemiah] Blackman, his son-in-law, who after his death left the greater part of his business enterprise to his son, David S. Blackman who carried on the success of the Blackman's Mills until his death in 1884. Ralph Ashley, father of Rolan M. Ashley married Sarah Blackman, daughter of Nemiah and sister to David S. Blackman. Rollin M. Ashley was the grandfather of the writer. In the Clark's Mills burial ground are buried many of the Clark family descendants of Thomas Clark of Clarks Landing who came to Port Republic during the Revolutionary War after the destruction of the village of Clarks Landing by the British under Patrick (Scott) Ferguson [Ferguson] on the night of Oct. 9, 1778.

Although I moved away from Port Republic at the age of twelve, I have the fondest recollections of my boyhood days in that community...My memory carries me back to those good old school days when I went to the "Little Red School House" at Gander Point on the South side of Nacote Creek near Isaac Smallwoods...I recall with pleasure the pine bough wigwam in the woods near the stream where the boys and girls often ate their lunch...Some chums I recall were Mandy, Sam and Henry Boling the whitest colored children I ever knew. Sam saved Howard Channel and I from many bad fights with Frank and Parker Clark...

Port Republic in those days was a thriving little village its citizens were well occupied and very few families were not able to make a comfortable living. There was little money in circulation and little money needed...Light by oil lamps and heat by stoves, fuel was mostly self obtained wood. Eggs would buy most anything required....

Joslin's meat wagon from Absecon came to town two days a week, yes Eggs would buy meat. Periodically a tin peddler would cover the territory and trade his wares. Of course in the evenings all young men loafed at Jermie Endicotts store and after his death at George Leeks. The baymen all sailed home Friday mornings from the bay and if the wind was favorable arrived early in the afternoon tied up below the bridge until early Monday morning. A few who did not have sail yachts rowed their garveys to and from Great Bay....

About 1886 Capt. Elmer French moved to Port Republic taking possession of the Clark estate on the South side of Nacote Creek at the bridge. Capt. French and his family had many city ideas and they were looked upon as being very wealthy...It was at their home that I attended my first house party...

It was about this time that the Brigantine Railroad was built and operated giving a direct station to Port Republic. The station being just beyond the Moss Mill Road above Pitney Road close to "Nif Noger" John Anderson's house. There was also a station at Oceanville just above Lilly Lake. The railroad did not last long, heavy maintenance of roadbeds across meadows and bridge, and storm tides proved that the venture was too expensive to continue....

Port Republic within the period of my recollection suffered two great catastrophes from which it will never recover. The first was in the death of David S. Blackman in 1884 and the second in the rerouting of the New York Road in 1922. The first of course was an act of god. The second an act of men through your County Board of Freeholders in which body you had two local representatives elected to look out for the interest of their

*Continued on page 7*

## Looking Back through the Files.....continued

community and who broke faith with their own people in permitting their own City to be rerouted off the map of travel forever. Had I lived in Port Republic at the time I surely would have instigated a demonstration that would have made this blow an impossibility. I recall sitting on the brick pavement in front of grandfather Ashley's store on that October noon in 1884 when David Blackman left his dinner, ran down the hill to the dam which was overflowing and washing away rapidly and after strenuous effort with shovel and fork passed the dam, but at what cost? The life of David S. Blackman who dropped dead on the dam, and in his death died the spirit of the community not only Blackman's Mill but of the entire village...They say that a man is without honor in his own town...I make this statement with the full knowledge of the recognition that would have been given one of our own had he not been of that quiet unassuming nature...I refer to none other than Ralph Ashley who recently passed away [1933], who before the days of commercial electricity, used the water wheel of the old grist mill as a prime mover for an electric generator of his own construction and by small transmission lines to the Blackman property where he lived, lighted same with electricity and also made an electrically generated device to pump water from a well by the pressing of a button. Later inventing a storage battery...Ralph Ashley...constructed a storage battery manufacturing plant, across the road from his old homestead and manufactured batteries for many years, operating the machinery by electricity generated in the old grist mill.....

[This article concludes with an extensive list of] "Some of the older male residents in the 1880's as I recall at this writing." [Please see the full article for this.]

Cale Collection – Port Republic

<sup>i</sup> Sons of the American Revolution Membership Application, Francis Joseph Cale, descendant of David Ashley accessed on Ancestry.com, 24 Jan. 2024.

<sup>ii</sup> FindAGrave, accessed 24 Jan. 2024.

<sup>iii</sup> Port Republic historian, Harriet Sander, has a different explanation: Micajah Smith was actively behind Evi Smith, Hugh McCullum and Richard Wescoat in getting an act passed by the Royal Legislature to build the dam across Nacote Creek [1774], and he built the saw and grist mills soon after; Harriet S. Sander, *Sketches of Old Port Republic*, 1964, np; ACHS call no. C-155.1.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid, np; According to Sander, Micajah Smith built the house which was later named the Franklin Inn; Daniel Mathis refurbished and named it. Jonas Miller, a brick mason from Philadelphia, was an "artist in his line."

<sup>v</sup> On March 1, 1905, having petitioned the State authorities for a charter, Port Republic became an incorporated city with Joseph C. Brown as the first elected mayor, Harriet S. Sander, *Souvenir Program, 1905-1955, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, City of Port Republic*, 1955, p 3; ACHS call no. C-155.3.



Constructing a vessel @Samuel VanSant's Boatyard; ACHS glass plate negative #367



Endicott House, Port Republic;  
ACHS photo #1549



Old School House at Port  
Republic; ACHS photo #1546

### Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

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**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
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**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
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*Where Atlantic County History Comes to Life*



Our Mission:

- To collect and preserve historical materials exemplifying the events, places, and lifestyles of the people of Atlantic County and southern New Jersey.
- To encourage the study of history and genealogy.
- To provide historical and genealogical information to our membership and the general public.