

ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

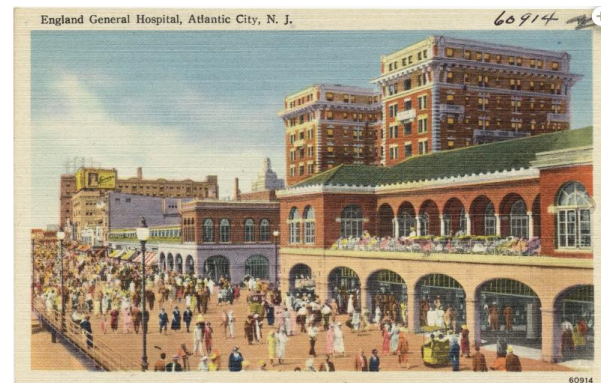
WINTER 2024

THOMAS M. ENGLAND GENERAL HOSPITAL ATLANTIC CITY

By Michael Connor

This article will explore how Atlantic City changed from a World War II basic training facility into what became the largest hospital in the United States. The Army Air Force basic training facility popularly known as “Camp Boardwalk” functioned for approximately one year. By July of 1943 all basic training functions were transferred to Greensboro, NC. A transition to a hospital facility had already begun.

Basic trainees become ill and are injured. Accordingly, a hospital was established in the Haddon Hall Hotel for their needs. As basic training wound down these medical facilities in Atlantic City were then utilized for those participating in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. Torch began November 8, 1942, and the North African Campaign ended May 13, 1943. Some of those wounded in that operation came to Atlantic City for treatment. Others who participated in that operation were brought here for evaluation, assessment, and reassignment.



The number of those wounded in Torch followed by those from the July 9, 1943, invasion of Sicily [Operation Husky] led planners to conclude that additional hospital facilities were needed. The same existing infrastructure that was favorable to use for basic training was also highly useful for a hospital facility. Adaptable buildings and necessary utilities were already there and performing a military function. Good railroad connections to the North East Corridor were present as were highways which were adequate for the time. The establishment of Naval Air Station Atlantic City provided a nearby airport for medical evacuees.

Because of medical needs, the environment was also an important consideration. A barrier island featuring a marine environment with good air quality and velocity with minimal industry coupled with the nature of the fuels used locally were all attractive to the planners. The latter vividly illustrates changing times. The general use of oil and anthracite coal as opposed to more polluting fuels was regarded as a plus.

Originally, the Army utilized the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall, Cedarcraft, Keystone, New England, Rydal and Warwick Hotels together with their ancillary facilities. Increasing numbers of wounded from the Italian campaign necessitated the increase in size of this as yet unnamed general hospital. In September of 1943 the Colton Manor, Dennis and Traymore were added. The Traymore initially served as a convalescent center and the Colton Manor was a residence for nurses and other female staff. Housing for enlisted personnel was provided at the Hotel Dennis. Convention Hall was used for offices and recreation. The boardwalk was ideal for patient exercise.

By a War Department General Order of October 7, 1943, the Atlantic City facility was designated as the Thomas M. England General Hospital. England was so honored because of his service in the Medical

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.

Holiday Sweet Sale

To Be Held At

The Atlantic County Historical Society

907 Shore Road
Somers Point, NJ 08244
609-927-5218

Saturday, December 21st, 2024

12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Featuring

Home Baked Cookies



Candy

Fudge

Brownies

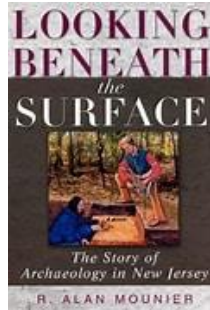
Holiday Breads

Sold as Prepackaged or Choose Your Own Sweets

\$11.00 per Pound

Tins Available for Purchase

All Proceeds to Benefit the
Atlantic County Historical Society
(A Nonprofit All Volunteer Organization)



Monday, March 17, 2025, 6:30pm
Atlantic County Historical Society
Looking beneath the Surface

Author R. Alan Mounier will present a look at the human past of New Jersey. With particular focus on the ancient past and native cultures, the author will detail the story of archaeology in the state as it has unfolded, and as it continues to unfold.

Monday, April 7, 2025, 6:30pm
Atlantic County Historical Society
Rob Patrick presents “*Brick Works*”

From Somers Brick Works in 1847 to Birch Grove Park in 1952. Learn about how the 21 ponds/lakes were formed and how and why this area was suitable for brickmaking.

Saturday, April 27, 2025, EARTH DAY

ACUA, 6700 Deliliah Rd., Egg Harbor Twp. 10:00am – 4:00pm
ACHS will have a table at the annual event. The Veterans History Project will be looking for veterans to interview. ACHS will be recruiting new memberships, and offering childrens activities.

Recycle and Get Rewarded at Staples

Sign up for Easy Rewards™ and earn points for recycling in store and online. It's free to join!

With the Staples recycling program, customers can bring in old items to their local Staples store on any day at any time. The stores will accept items like mobile phones, modems, scanners, digital projectors, eReaders, coffee machines under 40 pounds, shredders, tablets, and more.

See full list at: www.staples.com/stores/recycling

Customers should bring their items to a cashier at checkout to be recycled, and in turn, they'll be able to access their rewards on the Staples Connect app. Staples encourages consumers to clear any data or personal information off the devices before bringing them in. Additionally, for customers who want to recycle ink or toner, they must first have made at least a \$50 purchase in ink or toner at Staples within the last 180 days. Beyond that, Base Rewards members are limited to 10 recycled ink or toner cartridges per month, while Premier and Elite Rewards members can recycle up to 20 cartridges per month. There is no purchase necessary for customers to recycle their old items or receive their rewards. However, while customers are encouraged to recycle as many times and as many items as they'd like, they are only eligible to receive the \$5 reward once per month. Stores will also cap customers at seven items per day to be recycled. Staples will accept electronics for recycling from any customers but only those who are Staples Rewards members will receive the perks associated with the new recycling program.

Welcome

New Members

Christine Walley, *Northfield, NJ*
Tracy Hoffman, *Reading, PA*

The Atlantic County Historical Society
will be closed from: **December 18th** through
January 1st, 2025.

We will reopen **Thursday, January 2nd.**

OPEN SATURDAY, 12/21
FOR "SWEET SALE" ONLY.

OUR REGULAR HOURS ARE:
Thursday – Saturday: 10:00 – 3:30pm

IN MEMORIAM



MaryLou Adams
Robert Stiefbold, *Life Member*
Bob Hagerthy,
Member & Volunteer



This year's "Bringing History to Life" award was presented to ACHS Assistant Librarian Kathy Fritz by President Sid Parker & the board members, at the September board meeting. Congratulations Kathy! Thank you for all you do for the society!



Annual Appeal

Friend \$1 - \$49

Joseph Courter, Sally Pietrofitta, Robert Francois, Milton Siglin, Ben Brenner, Charlene Canale, Steve & Kimberly Marcus, Beryl Smith, Jim Higgins, Kathy Fritz, Dr. Jeannine Ingenito, Judy Schwartz, Paul Schopp, Lee Ellenberg Tere & Gene Doebley

Patron \$50 - \$249

Joan Berkey & Scott Smith, Dale Lonkart, Bob & Carol Warrington, Jim Foreman, Judith LaDrew Bayer, Cindy Mason Purdie, Wayne & Megan Ernst, Tony Marino & Rosalia Valenti, Cathie Skinner, Rosemary Wallace, Lewis & Deborah Barrett *IMO* Lewis & Martha Barrett, Carol-Anne Heinisch *IMO* Richard E. Squires, Ellen Hyatt *IMO* Richard E. Squires

Sponsor \$250 - \$1000

Michael O'Brien

Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

President: Sid Parker

Vice-President: Cindy Mason-Purdie

Recording Secy: Barbara Perry-Silva

Treasurer: Charlene Canale

Asst. Treasurer: (vacant)

Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt

Librarian: Rev. Norman Goos

Assistant Librarian: Kathy Fritz

Curator: Joan Frankel

Asst. Curator: Kevin Little

Chaplain: Rev. Norman Goos

Historian: Diane Bassetti

Trustees: Ben Brenner, Mike Connor,

Megan Ernst, Tom Kinsella,

James H. Mason, V, Mike O'Brien,

Heather Perez, Will Rozell,

Judith Schwartz, Dana Shupp,

Lynn Wood

Thomas M. England General Hospital, *continued...*

Administrative Corps of the United States Army. During a series of yellow fever experiments in Cuba while serving under Walter Reed he volunteered to stay in a bed which had been used by a yellow fever victim. He spent twenty days in that bed to refute the contention that contact with an infected person caused the disease transmission. Mosquito bites were established to be the fever's method of transmission.

As the war progressed and additional soldiers suffered wounds, changes were made to the hospital facilities. The patients were assessed and placed in the categories below:

Class I - patients who were ambulatory and had mild enough injuries that they could return to active service within a short period of time, and who did not continually require general hospital facilities or personnel.

Class II - patients who were ambulatory and were able to use the rehabilitation facilities; could be returned to active duty in a few months.

Class III - patients whose treatment still confined them to their wards.

Class IV - patients who were convalescent but were still bed patients or were confined to the wards and required further hospital treatment (27).

It was decided that England General Hospital would treat only the more severely wounded in Classes III and IV. Haddon Hall was the facility used for amputations and amputees. The basement housed an artificial limb shop where prosthetics were fitted and adjusted. The Traymore became a center for neurosurgery. Both became the largest facility of their kind in the United States.

On September 14, 1944 a hurricane struck. At that time hurricanes were not named. This one became known to locals as "The Hurricane of '44." Prediction was basically nonexistent and it came as a surprise. The only reports of preparation found in my research were at NAS Atlantic City where on September 13th aircraft were tied down facing into the anticipated easterly winds.

A huge storm surge washed large portions of the boardwalk all the way back to Arctic Ave. The Haddon Hall basement was flooded destroying the artificial limb shop. Hotel power plants were flooded including those of the Traymore, Dennis, and Chalfonte-Haddon Hall. At least four hospital trains were brought to evacuate patients. As power was restored and facilities were repaired patients returned. By October hospital functions began to resume normal operation.

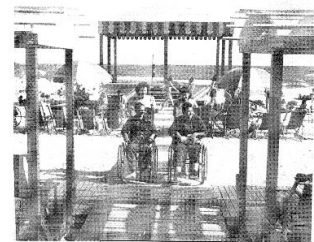
During 1945 the hospital population peaked at approximately 5000. Fighting in Europe ended May 7, 1945, and in the Pacific August 15, 1945. Large numbers of the wounded still needed continuing treatment. By January, 1946, this need was ending and a decision was made to close effective June 30, 1946. The first facility to close was the Traymore. As the closing process proceeded, the final functions were consolidated at the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall. Atlantic City's Thomas M. England General Hospital came to an end.



THERAPY ON SKATES - Lt. Marial Albright, physical therapist, gracefully assists two amputee patients as they skate on the Traymore sundeck.



PEDAL PHOT - It's a far cry from the B-25 bomber in which he crashed, but Pfc. Jimmy Wilson, famed quadruple amputee, finds this form of cycling to his liking.



Beachfront, Haddon Hall



BOARDWALK COMMANDOS - A trio of patients take time out to talk over the lattes while catching some sunlight on the Boardwalk.



DANCING CLASSES - With attentive physical therapists and technicians acting as partners, amputees are taught to dance in the Traymore Rice Hall.



Former Screen Actor Pvt. Donald O'Connor with England General Hospital comedians, Pinchus & Sweeney entertain on wards.

ACHS ANNUAL LUNCHEON

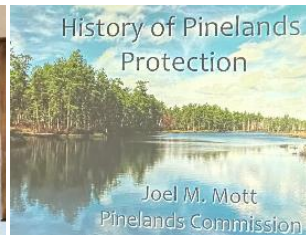
The following Members were voted to the
2025-2026 Governing Board:

Vice President: Cynthia Mason-Purdie
Assistant Librarian: Kathleen Fritz
Treasurer: Charlene Canale
Curator: Joan Frankel
Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt

Trustees:

William Rozell, Esq. Benjamin Brenner
Megan Ernst Lynn Wood

Following the installation of the nominees to the governing Board, “The “Bringing History to Life Award” was presented, in absentia, to Kathy Fritz, Asst. Librarian who was unable to attend. Guest Speaker Joel Mott, Principal Public Programs Specialist at the NJ Pinelands Commission, presented his program “History of Pinelands Protection”.



Above, Center – 2025-2026 Board Members being sworn in by Mike Connor. Left/Right: Joel Mott, of the Pinelands Commission, with his presentation.

Then & Now!

By Lynn Wood

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



Richard Collins opened Pioneer Market on Central Ave., Egg Harbor Twp., in September of 1953 after the Northfield store closed due to a fire in February of that same year. Three men built the new store on Central Ave. in 5 months! It later was named Uncle Dick’s Market. The store offered high quality fresh meats and produce, along with a gift shop, and was a popular spot for shoppers from all over Atlantic County.

The building today utilizes the same structure of the early market, but has been renovated for use as offices for Atlanticare Physician Group -Salartash Surgical Associates.



Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

Email: ACHSinfo@comcast.net

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook or on our website www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org

Newsletter Editor, Layout & Graphics : Ellen Hyatt
Contributors to this Issue:

Sid Parker, Mike Connor, Diane Miller & Lynn Wood,

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

Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

Historical Background [of the American Revolution]

by

Georgiana C. Blake

Given at placing of [DAR] Real Daughter Markers, Absecon, N.J.

November 11, 1931

Editor's Note: In advance of America's 250th birthday in 2026, we plan to cover topics in this column related to the Revolutionary War which occurred in and around the area which became Atlantic County. We've chosen to begin with the words of Georgiana C. Blake who was historian of the Atlantic County Historical Society when this presentation was given, and later its president. Here, she takes us back in time to who and what were in the area just prior to the Revolutionary War, and then touches on Daniel Tilton, giving us an example of the depth of service rendered by many local soldiers.

What follows has been shortened from a 5-page typescript found in ACHS Collection Box 20A, folder 13, Blake-Smick Collection.

....Can we in imagination place ourselves here just prior to the Revolutionary War? For more than seventy-five years colonists have been coming to Egg Harbor. At the mouth of the Great Egg Harbor River is Somers Point. Nearby we find Sculls and Englishes – Scullville, English Creek. The Indian Trail extending along the shore between Somers Point and Nacut Creek has been laid out in a road, and homes and plantations are located along its course. William Lake has had his plantation around Lakes Bay since 1702. His children and grandchildren are living nearby. One Peter White has purchased a thousand acres near Absecon. Daniel Leeds our first Surveyor General has selected the highest point of land on the coast between the Highlands and the Capes of Virginia for his home. A settlement has grown up there known as Leeds Point. Near Absecon we find Conovers, Corderys, and Doughtys – Conovertown, Corderys Brook, Doughtys Mills. Near Leeds Point are Higbees, Smiths, and Johnsons – Higbeetown, Smithville and Johnstontown.

As Early as 1726 Friends Meetings were held at Japhet Leeds at Leeds Point, Peter Whites at Absecon, John Sculls near Somers Point, and at Richard Somers' at Somers Point. A Friends Meeting House has now been built near Leeds Point – probably the first house for public worship in Atlantic County.

A young physician has lately come from Ireland and settled on a branch of the Nacut Creek, where he has a Mill.ⁱ A small settlement has formed around his mill known as Collins Mills. The branch of the creek is Collins Mills Branch. Every branch of river and creek that has sufficient power supports a mill. Beyond Collins Mills, - out the Moss Mill (Morse's Mill) Road, is Morse's Mill. On the Clarks Mill Branch, Thomas Clark, the eldest son of the Thomas Clark who had settled at Clarks Landing early in the century, has a mill. He has built a Meeting House here known as Clarks Mills Meeting House.ⁱⁱ Here the people from Chestnut Neck and the surrounding country come to worship. Up at The Forks, a brother of this Thomas Clark [Elijah Clark]ⁱⁱⁱ has built a Meeting House known as Clark's Log Meeting House. John Brainerd has been appointed by the good Presbyterians under the auspices of the "Scottish Missionary Society of London" as a Missionary to the Indians. The first Indian Reservation has been established out near Indian Mills. John Brainerd's duties are to the white people as well as to the Indians, and he makes long trips on horseback preaching in the different localities. Services are [also] held at...Blackmans Meeting House, – now Zion M. E. Church – and at Steelman's in Absecon. Here a Mr. Steelman has a "large, commodious" house, the upper part of which is not divided into rooms. Here the people come to worship.

Bog iron has been discovered in the swamps adjacent to our rivers, and Joseph Ball has purchased vast tracts of this land. Iron furnaces have been built at Batsto. An English gentleman named Read, has purchased an estate at The Forks, which he calls "Sweetwater".^{iv} His charming daughter Honoria (Kate Aylesford) is expected shortly from England, where she is being educated.^v

Separated from the outside world by the sea on one side, and by the Pine Barrens on the other, a cultural and social life has developed that is delightful, and that is distinctive and peculiar to this particular section. It has been said that "God sifted the wheat of Europe that he might send the choicest of the grain to a new world to form a civilization." These people are Englishmen, nurtured for generations in the principles of the Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights. It took this new civilization to give us our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution.

Into such a cultural and social atmosphere were born the members upon whose graves we have placed Real Daughter markers today...There is much we wish we knew of the activities during the Revolutionary War, which these members could have told us. They had heard the War and its activities, hardships and problems, the Constitution and its adoption, talked over and discussed many, many times. We wish we knew...how and where many of our local men

Continued on page 7

Looking Back through the Files.....continued

served. Some little can be gleaned from pension papers; but few received pensions....

The pension papers of John Tilton are of inestimable value. He tells us that he was Ensign in Capt. [Zephaniah] Steelmans Company; that this Company was stationed at Absecon to guard the coast from Somers Point to Leeds Point, and that they had many calls^{vi}...He also served as Captain of Marines on the armed vessel "Congress." The duty of this vessel was to clear the coast of Refugees and British Privateers^{vii}...[Mrs. Blake does not mention Tilton's next service as Ensign of a Company of State Troops commanded by Capt. David Weatherby in Col. Hillman's Regiment. The Company was in Haddonfield "till General Washington captured the Hessians on the 25th December 1776, then marched to Bordentown, where we remained till the morning of the day of the battle at Trenton 2 January 1777, that morning marched to Trenton arrived there about day light, were in the battle at that place that day..." – John Tilton Pension Papers.] After being wounded at the Battle of Timber Creek,^{viii} he came home, and as soon as sufficiently recovered, again served as Ensign in Capt Steelman's Company...[Mrs. Blake continues by wishing she knew more about the Revolutionary War, and while we could belatedly help her using all of the information that is available to us today, we unfortunately don't have the room here to do that. One thing we do want to clear up however, is her implication that John Tilton was in the Battle of Chestnut Neck. He clears this up by saying, "In the month of October 1778 at the time Chestnut Neck was burnt by the British, he was not at the battle at that place, he joined his Company [Capt. Steelman's, Col. Somers' Regiment] at Leeds Point he thinks, the second day after the battle...the Company remained at Leeds Point till the British vessels left which was he thinks about ten days..." - John Tilton Pension Papers.



The Colonel Elijah Clark home, also known as the Kate Aylesford Mansion, still stands on Pleasant Mills Road, 0.2 miles east of Route 542, village of Pleasant Mills. ACHS photo file #909.

ⁱ This physician was Dr. Richard Collins, who was born in Ireland in 1725. When the Revolutionary War broke out, though he was 51 years old, Collins enlisted as a private. "Tradition tells us that he fought in the ranks by day, and patched the wounded and healed the sick as a physician at night after the fighting had stopped." – Josephine S. Gardner [his great-great-granddaughter], "Richard Collins, 1725-1808," *Biographies and Family Records of Revolutionary Soldiers*, 1940, p. 81, DAR shelf at ACHS.

ⁱⁱ Thomas Clark had two sons who were Revolutionary War soldiers – Adrial [Adrial] and Parker; "Clark," Blake-Smick Collection, CB 20, folder 21.

ⁱⁱⁱ Elijah Clark was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the 3rd Battalion, Gloucester County Militia during the Revolutionary War. He and Major Richard Wescott, also of the 3rd Battalion, Gloucester County Militia, fortified at their own expense a small fort known as Fox Burrows, an important post which safeguarded the inlet leading to Chestnut Neck and Batsto; J. Anthony Harness, "Knight at Egg Harbor," *Sojourn, Summer 2018*, p. 37.

^{iv} "This was actually the home of Col. Elijah Clark which became known as the Kate Aylesford Mansion following the publication of a romantic Revolutionary War novel written in 1855 by Charles Peterson entitled *Kate Aylesford*. Its plot features a mythical heroine who lived in Pleasant Mills in a house which fit the description of Colonel Clark's home; Jack E. Boucher, *Absegami Yesteryear*, 1963, p. 87, ACHS Call No. D376.2. John E. Pearce, in his book, *Heart of the Pines*, 2000, p. 144, has a different story. Pearce writes that Richard Wescoat bought the house from his old friend, Col. Clark, in 1779, and that the heroine of the novel, *Kate Aylesford*, is Wescoat's daughter, Margaret. ACHS Call No. C2154 Pea.

^v The novel, *Kate Aylesford, A Story of The Refugees*, can be found in the ACHS Library, Call No. F434.1.

^{vi} Tilton tells us, "The first service that he performed was as Ensign of a Company of Minute men commanded by Capt Zephaniah Steelman in Col Richard Somers Regt...Shortly after the commencement of this service, the British ship Rebecca & Frances came ashore on Brigantine beach [16 Oct 1775], and Capt Steelmans Company was ordered to take charge of, and unload her, and to secure the prisoners and take them to Philadelphia...this declarant was one of the Guards that took the prisoners to Philadelphia." - John Tilton Pension Papers, incomplete and unsigned, 1835, ACHS Historical File, Revolutionary War L-2.2.

^{vii} While on board this sloop commanded by Capt. Craig, Tilton "cruised between the Capes of Delaware and Sandy Hook for several weeks, then put to Sea. After being out a few weeks we experienced a heavy Gale, and were obliged to go into the first port...in the Bahama Islands, there we remained about two or three weeks, and refitted, we then put to Sea and sailed homewards and arrived in Philadelphia...the Congress carried eight carriage guns, sixteen swivels and two howitzers, and about thirty small arms, and had on board between forty and fifty men." – John Tilton Pension Papers.

^{viii} While serving as Ensign of a Company of Militia commanded by Capt. George Payne in Col. Richard Somers Regiment, Tilton was in Gloucester on the Delaware until Fort Mifflin was taken by the British. After a skirmish with the enemy near Little Timber Creek Bridge, Tilton says, "They had a smart engagement with the enemy near Gloucester in which Lieut. John Lucas was killed and this declarant wounded, the wound was from a musket ball which passed through his shoulder and lodged in his shirt sleeve, and when he pulled his coat off the ball dropped out... – in a few days after he was taken home in the baggage wagon by one David Conover...remained under the care of Doctor Thomas Rennard the Surgeon of the Regiment for several months...the wound was painful and did not heal up until after there came out of it, a piece of the cloth of the coat that had been driven in by the ball..." - John Tilton Pension Papers.

**ATLANTIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**



907 Shore Road
Post Office Box 301
Somers Point, New Jersey 08244-0301

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO. 164
Pleasantville, NJ 08232

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**HAVE YOU
RENEWED
YOUR
MEMBERSHIP?**



**ATLANTIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**



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.