

ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

SUMMER 2018

HOW DO WE THANK YOU?

by Sid Parker

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in Sonnet XLIII, from her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, wrote “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.”

I won't attempt to compare our feelings for our many generous donors over the last 105 years to the depths of emotion which the poetess scribed, but I **will** say, without eloquence and **without** counting, that we are very, very thankful to so many of our members, and even to virtual strangers, for their generosity.

Several years ago, I read in some of our minutes from the 1960's, that a bequest from a former member basically paid for the construction of our building in 1968. Although the names may not ring very many loud bells with our current members, I would like to list here those individuals whose testamentary bequests made possible our recent, and very costly, building expansion. They are, in more or less chronological order since 1968: Louise Miller Scott, Herbert Stockinger, Robert McMullin, Elizabeth Steelman, William H. Hartigan and Laura Gaskill Hager.

All of these individuals were local residents at one time, and also members of the Society, with the exception of Mr. Hartigan who, through his friendship with Audrey Foster and attorney, Frank Ferry, both members, named the Society in his will. **Special Note:** Frank and Audrey put together an album of the life of Army Sgt. Major William H. Hartigan that includes an autobiographical sketch of his childhood years which influenced his decision to make a life in the military. Carol Heinisch of Frank's law office arranged for his burial at Arlington National Cemetery and transported his, and his wife's, ashes to Virginia. This very special album is in our library.

I mention all this because now is the time for our annual appeal. While the large bequests allow us to do the really **big** things, and we certainly hope that we are remembered in future wills, it is the regular donations from our members each year which keep us going along smoothly and which enable us to make some of the larger purchases and repairs which always come along. So, thanks to all of you who regularly answer our appeal and to those who will answer our appeal at this time.

We are a
 **Blue Star
Museum**
arts.gov/bluestarmuseums

See page 3 for details!

INSIDE THIS EDITION

Page 2 - Upcoming Events
Page 3 - Member News
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and 7 - Photos

The Atlantic County
Historical Society
will be closed:
Wednesday, July 4th &
Saturday, September 1st



Events and Happenings

Program Logistics

RISLEY HOMESTEAD

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



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 for individual and small group guided tours. Contact ACHS for details.

ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

907 Shore Road, Somers Point, NJ
– Auditorium – (elevator available)
Monday, September 10th 6:30pm

TRAILS, INNS AND CHARCOAL STATIONS OF OLD BUENA VISTA...LITTLE KNOWN PLACES

Mark Dimitroff will present. Dimitroff is a Natural Historian, a board member of the South Jersey Culture and History Center at Stockton University and an adjunct professor teaching courses on the geography of the New Jersey Pinelands.

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

6647 West Jersey Ave.
Egg Harbor Twp. NJ
Saturday, September 29th

YE OLDE FLEA MARKET

The ACHS is purchasing a spot at the EHT Historical Society annual event. We are urging our Board Members and Volunteers to contribute items for sale. Also, the Library will have a table selling our extra books and cookbook. All proceeds go to the ACHS.

BOSCOV'S DEPT. STORE

6725 Black Horse Pike
Egg Harbor Twp.
Tuesday, October 16th 9am -10pm

BOSCOV'S FRIENDS & FAMILY DAY Tickets sell for \$5 each. Boscov's will give 25% off each store purchase to the buyer; even on sale prices. Tickets may be purchased from any Program Committee Member ahead of time or from their table set up in Boscov's that day. The ACHS is recipient of the purchase price of each ticket. (Contact ACHS for Tickets)

GREATE BAY COUNTRY CLUB

Somers Point-Mays Landing Rd.
Somers Point, NJ
Saturday, October 20th - 11:30am
Reservation Required. Fee: \$32.

Members and the general public are invited. Following the installation of the nominees to the 2017-2018 governing Board, "The "Bringing History to Life Award" will be presented. **Members will vote on nominees to the Governing Board at this time.**



Spotlight on the Shelves (or the Museum!)

a treasure hiding in plain sight...

Mary Beth Ortzman

This issue's spotlight note will not focus on shelves but on the walls of the second floor. A quick glance of the north wall in the upstairs Auditorium will give readers a small tour of the ship-building tools and a glimpse at small hull models used by various ship building yards in our area.

You can see hand-held tools and imagine the time the men spent forming the various types of ship/boat frames and cladding them in overlapping boards. You might question how they were made water-tight and the use of the various hulls, keels, and different silhouettes. If you are really curious about boatbuilding, you can go to the library on the first floor and find books on boatbuilding on the shelves!



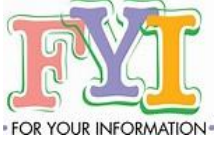


AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU!

DONATIONS:

Patron \$50 - \$249

Sid and Pat Parker, *IMO* Laura Reeves Goos



The Atlantic County Roundtable of Historical Organizations will present "*Curator's Choice.*" Come see museum artifacts from the various member organizations.

Wednesday, October 11, 2018 - 7pm. *Light refreshments.*
Northfield City Hall Council Chambers
Shore Rd., Northfield.

Welcome

The Atlantic County Historical Society is pleased to welcome our new members:

Barbara Anna Higbee Schmitt, *Gibsonia, PA*
Richard Baxter, *Mays Landing, NJ*
Kim Baker, *Egg Harbor Township, NJ*
Timothy McCorristin, *Whiting, NJ*
Marilyn Stewart, *Northfield, NJ*
Patsy Tallman, *Egg Harbor Township, NJ*
Frank Becktel, *Atlantic City, NJ*
Virginia LeRoy, *Northfield, NJ*

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Once again, a team from the Atlantic County Historical Society is busy preparing an off-site program. This time it will be an introduction to genealogy in the form of a Power Point program with the tongue-in-cheek title of "Who's Your Daddy?" for Gilda's Club of South Jersey, a cancer support group.

This will be a Lunch and Learn event on Wednesday, July 11 from 12 to 2 pm in the Living Room of the AtlantiCare Cancer Care Institute, 2500 English Creek Ave., Building 400 in Egg Harbor Twp. Lunch will be provided from 12:15-12:45 p.m. and the program will run from 12:45-2:00pm. It is open to Gilda's members and the public. Registration is required by calling (609) 407-4788.

Working on this program are Mary Beth Ortzman, ACHS' head research query volunteer; Norm Goss, librarian, and Diane Miller, assistant librarian.

WE ARE A BLUE STAR MUSEUM!



Now that our construction dust has almost cleared, we can once again say that we are a Blue Star Museum. This is the 9th year of the program that encourages museums to offer free admission to the nation's active duty military and their families from the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

Our museum hopes to be fully functional in June, and though our museum tours are always free, we will waive the \$5 library research fee for Blue Star families. This is a wonderful opportunity to express our appreciation for the commitment and sacrifice of the military in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums across America. A list of participating museums nationwide is available at arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

Email: ACHSinfo@comcast.net

Visit our Facebook page or website

www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org

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Norm Goos, Dale Lonkart, Diane Miller & Charlene Canale

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

Looking Back through the Files

Editor's Note: This paper about the Westcoat Free Burial Ground was transcribed from our Genealogy Files - Family Records, Kenneth N. Scull Collection, folder 123, pp. 2-5. Mr. Scull was a historian and first vice-president of the Atlantic County Historical Society in 1972.

Though filed under genealogy, the subject of a burial ground deviates from the family records one would expect to find here. While we don't know when this paper was written, we do know that it has been in the ACHS library since 1981.

This article has been transcribed as originally written with editorial additions enclosed in brackets. The footnotes were added by the transcriber.

The Pleasantville and Atlantic City Turnpike [now referred to as the Old Turnpike]

Among the earliest settlers of this section were the Lakes. By the time Atlantic County was formed from the eastern part of Gloucester County in 1837, we find among its most prominent citizens one John Lake.

He owned hundreds of acres of meadow land which he was draining by digging ditches. He then built roads so as to make use of the meadow grass for hay. Like many of the early settlers he manufactured salt from the sea water. His main source of income, however, was from oysters and apples which he sold in the Philadelphia markets, - the money being used mostly to purchase more land to clear for agricultural purposes. He helped make the back road from Pleasantville to Bargaintown. He was one of [the] leaders in having surveyed and making the present "Shore Road" having advocated a much wider road than was built. He prophesied a road between Pleasantville and Atlantic City. Being a pioneer worker, it is natural that we find his sons were men interested in public welfare.

His son David was born October 17, 1818. He followed his father in the desire for better roads for the community. One of the great efforts of his life was the development of the Pleasantville and Atlantic City Turnpike or Plank Road. This was the first public highway between Atlantic City and the Mainland.

In the year 1852 a few families beside those of Jeremiah Leeds, Andrew Leeds, Ryon Adams, John Briant, and James Leeds were living in Atlantic City or Absecomb Beach. It was about this time that a railroad was being agitated as the trip across country to Absecon, thence to Absecomb Beach by boat, was very tedious. About this time a road from Pleasantville to Absecomb Beach was also being planned.

In 1853 we find a special act of the legislature with the following names as commissioners to open books of subscription for a new road: - John Lake, Pardon Ryon, Lucas Lake, Steelman Leeds, Daniel Ingursull, William Adams, Jesse S. Lake, David Lake, William Bartlett, and Simon Lake.

The capital stock of the company was to be twenty thousand dollars with the privilege of increasing it to any sum not exceeding sixty thousand dollars and divided into shares of twenty five dollars each.

The company was to construct and make a turnpike road one hundred feet wide across the salt marsh or meadows laying between the village of Pleasantville and Absecomb Beach, the road to commence at the main "Shore Road", leading from Somers Point to Leeds Point, at or near where the end of the road leading from Pleasantville to Mays Landing intersects the Shore Road, - from thence as near straight as is convenient to Long Point on Absecomb Beach.

The following were to be the toll rates: - For every carriage, sleigh or sled drawn by one beast, two cents; for every additional beast, two cents; for every horse and rider, or led horse or mule, one cent; for every dozen calves, sheep or hogs, one cent; for every dozen horses, mules or cattle, three cents.

Joshua Adams who worked on the turnpike the greater part of his life, tells of the use of the self-laying tractor. He says that Capt. Amariah Lake was put on a Committee to go to Boston to buy an engine.

Joseph Moore says there were about thirty-five of the tractors to cart gravel. An engine was used and he remembers that the first engineer on the Pennsylvania Railroad, running from Camden to Atlantic City was the first engineer on the tractor or Trackless. His name was Finch. Mr. Moore narrates a little incident pertaining to this engine. At that time a steam engine proved quite an attraction and all the boys of the neighborhood were around for rides. Hearing the exhaust they were afraid the engine was going to explode and would hurriedly throw open the furnace and run as fast as they could for their lives.

Looking Back through the Files *continued...*

Elmer Frambes remembers that Daniel Martin Sr., and Jesse Lake carted the first load of sand. It was drawn by a pair of sorrel horses and dumped near Fish Creek.

Various people have told of the construction of the road, the filling in, pile driving, laying poles, etc.

Vincent Lake, in a letter to his niece, Mrs. Mary B. Gardiner, says that his father, David Lake, began in 1864 and that it took fourteen years of pioneer work to arouse sufficient public interest to raise \$33,000 with which to make the road passable. Of this sum he furnished so much, that he became financially embarrassed in later life and lost very valuable property.

John Henry Lake of Ocean City, a son of David Lake, worked on the road and has kindly furnished much valuable information. Below is quoted the greater part of his letter: -

"In reference to the Pleasantville and Atlantic City Turnpike, the building of it had its first good start in the use of the self-track-laying car, invented and built by Jesse S. Lake and David Lake.

It was first believed by many that the only practical road was a plank road, but after thoroughly investigating some plank roads then in existence, it was found to be very expensive to build and hold fast against violent storms. The upkeep in after years would be too great. With the patented [patented?] self-track-laying car, they could haul five tons on the even soft surface by laying hay down to keep the horses from sinking in the mud. For awhile the turf would hold with gravel about eight inches deep, but after the turf rotted in places, it was found they were compelled to use small pine poles placed "butt and butt about" to make as smooth a road as possible. The ponds were filled with sods dug from the sides of the road, wheeled in on barrows, then poled and graveled. The creeks, they were compelled to build over on piling on account of letting the tide flow in and out. They were built low so that a common high water would wet the poles, as the salt kept them from rotting.

When one considers the road of five miles, and the poles two or three miles distant in the woods, it was no small task to cart poles and gravel. The end of the road near Atlantic City cost \$2.50 per cubic yard for the gravel.

Only one bridge, - that was half way to Atlantic City, over Jonathans Thorofare, was built up so small boats could pass under at all times of tide.

The building of the bridge across Beach Thorofare was quite a contract in those days, as it was necessary to have a draw-bridge at the channel so that boats sailing in those waters could pass. It was built same as the road, except on native pine piling and stringers, with pine poles placed as close as practical, and covered several inches with oyster shells to prevent muck and gravel from washing away by the swash of water beneath at high water. The draw-bridge was built on small car wheels and run back and forward by pinion and rack, the bridge tender walking around with a crank about eight feet long, - a primitive arrangement, yet it answered the purpose. The original cost was \$9,000 - in those days considered quite an outlay.

David Lake designed the bridge and built it with a self-built pile driver. The hammer was made of white oak butt weighing 620 pounds, and it was operated by ten men on a line running it up, then hitting a trippet [trippet]¹, it would drop on the piling forcing it down. In some places they struck quick sand making it tedious work.

At no time did I ever hear either Jesse S. or David Lake refer to any personal gain, only as public benefit to the community in general."

The upkeep of this road was no small task. Stock was transferred and sold and one person will recall when such and such a person was at the head of the company, while somebody else will recall some other person who had charge. Judge Joseph Thompson had the controlling stock for a number of years. The road was sold to the Atlantic City and Suburban Railway Company in 1902.

R. A. Cale, a former superintendent of the Atlantic City and Suburban Company gives an interesting description of the road as he found it. He says there is not a particle of turnpike that is on sand, there being a cavity of nothing but muck ranging from ten to a hundred feet before reaching bottom. The original Jersey pine piling are in perfect condition except the exposed part which has been eaten by worms. The pilings were laid crossed and the whole road is really a suspension bridge. Soundings at Fish Creek showed thirty-two feet of muck before reaching a stratum of just a few inches of sand and then about seventy feet more of muck. To

Looking Back through the Files *continued...*

build the bridges, pilings were pushed down and held together by chains, poles were placed as in building a pen and the larger trees and poles went across.

The old Turnpike was the only driveway into Atlantic City for more than sixty years. The benefits to Atlantic City as the result of the road cannot be enumerated, but the old road is now a thing of the past, - in fact almost forgotten.

(Signed) Agnes Leeds Risley

¹ Trippet – any mechanism that strikes or is struck at regular intervals, www.collinsdictionary.com



Old Turnpike, 1868. The building on the left shows the Harris Carriage Factory, at center is the Toll Gate House and the McCollough and Smith Co. (suppliers of brick, hay and straw, flour, feed and coal) is on the right. Background shows Burr Collins' Oyster House. From ACHS photo album, "Pleasantville Historical Photos, Vol. 1, p. 13.

"THE BEACHES, BREACHES AND BAYS AND ATLANTIC COUNTY"

Using over 100 maps, our librarian, Norm Goos, showed us how and why the beaches and inlets have changed their forms over the last 400 years and in doing so changed the shape of our bays and marshlands.

Over 80 people enjoyed this program and stayed to chat afterwards.



Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

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Assistant Librarian: Diane Miller

Curator: Joan Frankel

Asst. Curator: Kevin Little

Historian: Diane Bassetti

Chaplain: Rev. Norman Goos

Trustees:

Diane Bassetti, Ben Brenner, Sheryl Collins, Freda Heintz, James Mason, V, Mary Beth Ortzman, Heather Perez, Donald Perry, Ruth Taylor, Will Rozell & Lynn Wood.

MishMash

a little bit of this
a little bit of that.



Above: Joan Frankel & Dale Lonkart provide St. Joseph Regional School 4th Graders with a tour of the Museum in May.

Right Top: Leo Schoffer talks about his book *A Dream • A Journey • A Community: A Nostalgic Look at Jewish Businesses in and Around Atlantic City*.

Right Bottom: Donna Drayton provides an interesting presentation of vintage wedding attire.



Atlantic County Historical Society was represented at the ACUA event last Sunday, April 22, Earth Day. Sheryl received some Veteran contacts and interested folks signed up to volunteer at the museum/library. Charlene & Ed Canale, Babs Perry-Silva and Sheryl Collins handed out pens and seed packets. Lynn and Babs kept the kiddos happy as they painted their hands with Earth Day related designs and then were allowed to reach in the treasure box for a special treat! The donation jar was fed frequently during the day! Good times!



**ATLANTIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**



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**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.