

# ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

SUMMER 2021

## SOME ORIGINAL ATLANTIC CITY

By Michael Connor

Atlantic City was incorporated on May 1, 1854. It was not until construction of multiple rail lines in the 1870's that exponential growth occurred. Hundreds of thousands of visitors could conveniently and cheaply come to the resort. In our family's personal collection is a souvenir picture book from 1885. Two images from this book provide the inspiration for this article. All of the images from this book are available in a pdf book I created called "Atlantic City 1885" available in the digital archive of ACHS. Photographic slides of all the images are available in the society's photo archive.

### CHILDREN'S SEASHORE HOUSE



In 1872 some philanthropic Philadelphians acquired a cottage at the corner of South Carolina and Pacific Avenues to provide a healthful seashore environment for ill children. Salt water and sea breezes continue to be highly regarded.

In the winter of 1872 the Children's Seashore House began formal incorporation and a better and more permanent location was sought. What resulted was the first pediatric rehabilitation hospital and the fourth pediatric hospital in the United States.

In February of 1873 "The Children's Seashore House for Invalid Children" was incorporated and a charter was granted by the New Jersey Legislature. Land was purchased at Ohio Avenue and the Boardwalk and construction began. The structures depicted in the image above resulted. Some 55 children were accommodated, with cottages for mothers. The original facility only operated in the summer season with children and families returning to Philadelphia at summer's end. St. Christopher's Hospital for Children was created in Philadelphia as an outpatient facility to serve the children during the winter season and to provide employment continuity for the Seashore House Staff.

*Continued on page 7*

#### INSIDE THIS EDITION

- Page 2 - Upcoming Events**
- Page 3 - Member News**
- Page 4 - Looking Back Through the Files...**



# 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.

### 2021 ACHS ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Location and timing details are being finalized. Members and the general public are invited. Following the installation of the nominees to the governing Board, "The "Bringing History to Life Award" will be presented. **Members will vote on nominees to the Governing Board at this time. Please check Facebook and/or the ACHS website for more information.**

### BOSCOV'S DEPT. STORE

6725 Black Horse Pike  
Egg Harbor Twp.

Wednesday, October 20th 8am -11pm

### 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)

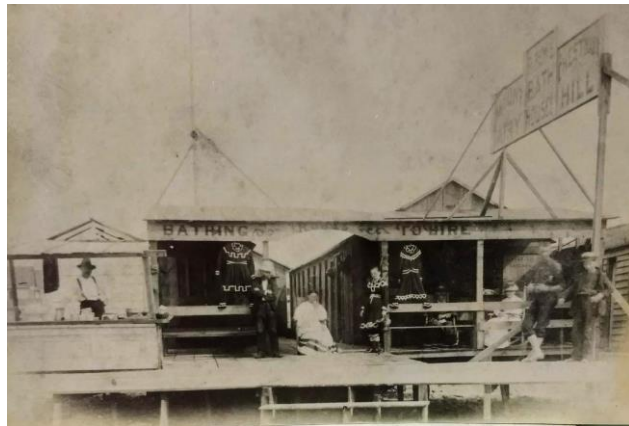
## Yard Sale

Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>  
(rain date, June 13<sup>th</sup>)

and... Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup>  
(rain date, September 19<sup>th</sup>)

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

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



Recently the Society received a photo album from the Beaches Museum located in Jacksonville Beach, Florida. They recognized that a few of the images were of Atlantic City, NJ and there didn't appear to be anything relating to the Jacksonville area. The album turned out to include many early photos related to the family of Dr. David F. Bew who resided in Margate as a young boy and later in Northfield as a physician. One image in particular is identified on the back as being 1878 and shows the Bew's Bath House in Atlantic City displaying two styles of ladies bathing attire that were available for rent. The woman seated in white is identified as Sophia Bew. The family would eventually build a hotel on the site of the bath house on the Atlantic City Boardwalk at Illinois Avenue.

### Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

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

Visit our Facebook page or website

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

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

Sid & Pat Parker, Mike Connor, Cindy Mason-Purdie,  
Diane Miller, Brittani Mazzone & Charlene Canale

*The Atlantic County Historical Society received an operating grant  
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## Spotlight on the Shelves

*a treasure hiding in plain sight...*

As a cultural institution, ACHS is dedicated to preserving the past in order to educate for the future. Stockton University also contributes to this cause in the way of a bi-yearly journal entitled, *SoJourn*, “dedicated to the history, culture, and geography of South Jersey”. Edited by Thomas Kinsella and Paul W. Schopp, *SoJourn*, collaborates with students, historians, and South Jersey residents to provide a vast variety of comprehensive material. Each issue is filled with fascinating content and represents the multifaceted aspects of our respective hometowns.

Located on our shelves as C-2632, we currently have (7) issues available to the public. A notable issue is a Special Issue from the Summer of 2018, which is focused mainly on the Revolutionary War. Complete with color maps, each article resonates intrigue and emphasizes the forgotten role that South Jersey played in our nation’s history.

For those less interested in military-oriented content, the *SoJourn* explores subjects such as tradework (including glass working and oyster harvesting), forgotten or revived general stores, and natural topography. Publications such as *SoJourn* help to keep our local history accessible and relevant to our community and beyond.

*Brittani Mazzone*

# Welcome

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

Andrea McVeigh, *Ft. Washington, PA*  
Robert and Carol Warrington, *Burtonsville, MD*  
Carla Welsh, *Springfield, PA*

## TURN UP THE HEAT

.....Pleeeeeease!!

As winter was drawing to a close in March and some of our finally-vaccinated Tuesday Work Crew were coming back, our boiler decided to call it quits. We know that Eskimos, Laplanders and maybe Green Bay Packers fans wouldn’t be bothered by sitting in a 62-degree library but none of those hardy souls populated our volunteer staff; just a bunch of seniors in hats ‘n’ coats.

Our HVAC company searched high and low and found an \$800. replacement part for our 33-year old boiler but the long-term prognosis is looking bleak. So, now you know where this is going, right? The early estimates indicate that a new boiler, with the attendant relocation of pipes, vents, evaporator and circulator will be in the range of \$15000.

We will be in air conditioning mode for the next several months so heating the building is not a concern. We’ll plunge, not dip, into our savings when, **not if**, the old boiler must be replaced but we would very much appreciate your helping us plan for that chilly day. Please use the enclosed envelope, with our “warm” thanks.

*Sid Parker*

**COVID UPDATE:** The Society remains closed to the public. **We will reopen Wednesday, September 8, 2021.** Until then, appointments for research may be requested, BY EMAIL ONLY.

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

Arrangements will be made based on volunteer availability. Please visit our website for additional information.

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

### Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

President: Sid Parker, Jr.

Vice-President: Cindy Mason-Purdie

Recording Secy: Barbara Perry-Silva

Treasurer: Charlene Canale

Asst. Treasurer: Pat Parker

Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt

Librarian: Rev. Norman Goos

Assistant Librarian: Diane Miller

Curator: Joan Frankel

Asst. Curator: Kevin Little

Chaplain: Rev. Norman Goos

Trustees: Ben Brenner, Mike Connor,

Brendan J. Honick, Tom Kinsella,

James H. Mason, V, Heather Perez,

Donald Perry, Will Rozell, Dana Shupp,

Ruth Taylor, Lynn Wood & Diane

Bassetti, *Historian*

# Looking Back through the Files.....

Diane J. Miller

## Women's Early Contributions to Medicine in Atlantic County

*Editor's Note: This article differs from most which have appeared in this column. Instead of pulling from an existing file, we have selected items from a recently donated collection which is in the process of being organized. When complete, it will be accessible at ACHS as a digital file.*

*The collection, which contains records of the Atlantic County Medical Society, was compiled by the late Dr. James H. Mason, IV, formerly of Ventnor, who was historian for the medical society. From it, we have chosen to highlight the biographical sketches of six women who were early doctors in Atlantic County who practiced at a time when it was unusual for females to do so, and one nurse who became superintendent of Atlantic City Hospital.*

*A few additional sources within the ACHS collection were consulted to add extra content to this article.*

### **Dr. Rebecca C. Hallowell**

A small clipping from an unknown newspaper states, "The resort's first woman physician was Dr. Rebecca C. Hallowell, back in the 1880s. It was the custom then for the city to locate a street light in front of a doctor's office to make it easy to find it at night. The City Council was about to turn down Dr. Hallowell's application for a light when the mayor chided them for discrimination against a woman, and she got the light; but no other record of her seems available."

### **Dr. Jane Steele Divine (1862-1942)**

Dr. Divine's obituary, which is dated June 18, 1942, called her "physician, pioneer Atlantic City resident and a leading educator here." She died at the age of 80 after a brief illness at her home at 601 Pacific Ave. where she had been living with a sister, Miss Margaret G. Divine and a niece, Miss Mary E. Divine.

Born in Philadelphia on March 4, 1862, Dr. Divine was a graduate of the Women's Medical School in Philadelphia. She moved to Atlantic City permanently in 1894 where she had some of the city's earliest physicians as her colleagues, including Dr. Thomas Reed and Dr. Boardman Reed.

She is probably best remembered as operator and principal of the French and English School at 601 Pacific Ave. where many leading, local people were educated. Among them were Colonel Harrison and Harold Cooke of the Seaside Hotel, and P. Mortimer Lewis II, a proprietor of the Wielland-Lewis chain of moving picture theatres.

Her obituary continues by stating, "As a physician, Dr. Divine was unusually prominent in a day when women physicians were almost unheard of. She was one of the most influential and active figures in the founding of Atlantic City Hospital."<sup>i</sup>

Funeral services were conducted at her home by Jeffries & Keates followed by interment at Woodlands Cemetery, Philadelphia.

Her father, William Divine Jr., was a passenger on the first train to Atlantic City.

### **Dr. Mary E. Townsend (1868-1952)**

The newspaper clipping containing Dr. Mary Townsend's obituary has two handwritten notations: "Born 68" [presumably 1868], and "3-13-52", most likely the date of her death or obituary.

Like Dr. Divine, she was a graduate of the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia. Under age at the time of her graduation, she was retained in a hospital for two years before she could practice. She practiced medicine in Atlantic City for 60 years and for some of this time was resident physician in a local hotel [unidentified]. The 1904 Atlantic City Directory has the following listing: "Townsend Mary E., physician, 13 S Pennsylvania av."

This collection contains a letter written on February 16, 1928, by Dr. J. H. Marcus, secretary of the Atlantic County Medical Society<sup>ii</sup> to the treasurer of the Medical Society of New Jersey. Enclosed was a \$10 check for the dues of Dr. Mary E. Townsend, 118 So. Kingston Avenue, Atlantic City, N.J.

The daughter of Thomas V. Townsend, Dr. Townsend died at the home of her brother, Walter Townsend in Camden after a long illness. Services were held at 1713 Atlantic Ave., Atlantic City, and burial was in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia.

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

### Dr. Elizabeth Taylor Wright (1871-1937)

Dr. Wright died March 17, 1937. Her obituary states, "Dr. Elizabeth Taylor Wright, for the past 18 years resident physician at Galen Hall Hotel<sup>m</sup>, died at noon yesterday after an illness of three weeks. She has been a resident of Atlantic City 29 years and was one of the few women doctors here." It later adds, "Before coming here, Dr. Wright practiced for several years in Metuchen, N.J."



Dr. Wright was a graduate of Boston University and held memberships in the Atlantic County Medical Society, New Jersey State Medical Society, American Medical Society, Welsh Club, Woman's Research Club and American Association of University Women.

She was survived by a sister, Mrs. J. W. Crevelling of Cachranon, PA, and a brother, Walter Wright of Columbus, NJ.

This collection contains an undated letter in which Dr. Wright writes to a Dr. Marcus saying that she was not going to pay her 1930 dues to the Atlantic County Medical Society because she expected to transfer her membership to the Middlesex County Medical Society. The letter was headed by the address, 52 Oak Ave., Metuchen, N.J., and in concluding it she wrote, "Have been living here for the past 2 ½ years in practice with Dr. C. A. Hofer." This information doesn't mesh with that in her obituary, so we'll leave this to conjecture.

### Dr. Lydia Herts Cromwell (1874-?)

Dr. Cromwell was born in Bedford, PA, on July 28, 1874. On May, 5, 1893, she graduated from Bedford High School with high honors and immediately decided to study and practice medicine despite the objections of her family. Her determination prevailed, and in October 1893 she entered Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital in Chicago where she graduated as Medical Doctor on March 26, 1896. In early spring of 1897, Dr. Cromwell accepted the position as Resident Physician at Galen Hall Sanatorium in Atlantic City.

Her photo appears on page 224 of John F. Hall's book, *Daily Union History of Atlantic City and County, New Jersey*, published in 1900. On page 331 of his book, Hall explains that on the evening of May 17, 1897, in response to all the homoeopathic physicians of Atlantic County, a group unanimously decided to form a club for the advancement of "Homoeopathy." Shortly after, Dr. Cromwell was elected to membership in this group which was known as the Atlantic City Homoeopathic Club.



### Dr. Madeline A. Hallowell (1885-1964)

A handwritten biography of Dr. Hallowell says that she was born in 1885 in Conshohocken, PA, a town largely owned by her grandfather Hallowell. Her mother was a descendant of George Fox, founder of the Quakers, and her great-great grandfather was John Potts, a Quaker who gave the headquarters at Valley Forge to George Washington. In addition, Theodore Roosevelt was a descendant of the Potts family.

Dr. Hallowell was a 1906 graduate of the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia. In 1909, she succeeded Dr. Mary Dunlap as head of the New Jersey State School at Vineland where over a 10-year period, the school grew from 138 to 750 children.

After treating children with virulent influenza in Jamesburg [presumably NJ], Dr. Hallowell contracted the flu, followed by pericarditis and coronary disease. After a long convalescence, she was sent to Margate by a physician in December 1919. Here, in 1920, she bought property at Sumner and Ventnor Avenues and opened the Hallowell School for mentally retarded children.

According to her obituary, Dr. Hallowell of 105 S. Newport Ave., Ventnor, died unexpectedly (Sept. 13, 1964) in Atlantic City Hospital. She operated the Hallowell School for Mentally Retarded in Margate until a year before her death. A Margate resident for 41 years, she was survived by a brother, Percival Hallowell of Haverford, PA.

*Continued on page 6*

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



### Nellie McGurran (1892-?)

Nellie McGurran was born October 24, 1892 in Ottawa, Canada, to James and Ellen (Murtha) McGurran. In 1910, after completing a business education at Gowling's Business College in her native city, she came all the way from Ottawa to enter the nurses' training department at the Atlantic City Hospital. She completed the three-year course in 1913. "In recognition of her splendidly unselfish and efficient performance of duty, she was promoted to superintendent of the hospital in 1921 by the Board of Governors."<sup>iv</sup>

Dr. James H. Mason, IV humanized her in his "Notes & Anecdotes on Nellie." He wrote, "Nellie was wedded to the hospital." She had a private room with bath in the hospital which "overlooked the emergency entrance so she could keep up with the flow of possible admissions."

She made rounds every day, starting on the top floor, touring each room or ward to see every patient accompanied by the head nurse. She inspected for cleanliness and neatness and was always having painting done. Dr. Mason remembered a North Carolinian who had interned in the hospital during WWI saying when he later joined the medical staff, "He was sure the hospital's hallways were a foot narrower than during his interne days due to the many coats of paint applied over the years."

Nellie was ultimately in charge of the Atlantic City Hospital School of Nursing which was the area's only local educational facility beyond the high school level. In addition, despite the hard work involved in running Atlantic City's Municipal Hospital for Contagious Diseases, she offered to take the responsibility at a salary of \$1 per year.

As she reached her 60s, Nellie developed health problems which caused her to retire after more than 30 years as hospital superintendent. She returned to Ottawa where she died.

Dr. Mason concluded by writing, "For many years Nellie McGurran was synonymous with Atlantic City Hospital. She gave her life to it. Nothing at the Atlantic City Medical Center memorializes this extraordinary life of service except a small plaque in a relatively non-public area. Yet no physician, nurse or administrator is likely ever to match her achievements or her example of commitment and leadership."

<sup>i</sup> Atlantic City Hospital was organized in 1897, and opened on Nov. 30, 1898; Frank M. Butler, "New Jersey Medical Society First in U.S.," Atlantic City Press, May 30, 1937, accessed at ACHS WPA File, Medical Doctors-Dentists.

<sup>ii</sup> Atlantic County Medical Society was founded June 7, 1880 at a meeting in Council Chamber, City Hall, Atlantic City. The eight charter members were Dr. Job Braddock Somers, Dr. Theophilus Boysen, Dr. Denman Bevis Ingersoll, Dr. Talcott P. Waters, Dr. Edmund H. Madden, Dr. W. Boardman Reed, Dr. Benjamin T. Abbott and Dr. Willard Wright; "County Medical Society Founded in 1880 by Eight Physicians," Atlantic City Press, August 24, 1952, accessed in ACHS Collection Box 12B, folder 18.

<sup>iii</sup> The 1904 Atlantic City Directory lists "Galen Hall Co. (Galen Hall), & sanatorium, S Connecticut av c Pacific av." An April 2002 article in "The Heidelberg," published by the Heidelberg Heritage Society of Wernersville, PA, says of Galen Hall, "No contagious or obnoxious diseases admitted, as Galen Hall is not a hospital. It is a Sanatorium conducted as a first-class hotel, - especially meeting the requirements of those needing quiet, rest and home comforts, as well as those needing medical attendance. The hotel is listed in business directories as early as 1896." Accessed in ACHS Vertical File, Hotels-General.

<sup>iv</sup> H. J. Souder, *Who's Who in New Jersey, Atlantic County*, Gazette-Review Co., Atlantic City, 1925, p. 72



Intern Sam Mairone under the guidance of ACHS members Dale Lonkart & Norm Goos.

With the end of the school year in June, the Society will bid a fond farewell to Sam Mairone, whose semester internship enabled the digitization of the extensive Atlantic County Medical Society collection. Working 10 hours per week onsite, his tasks were guided by Norman Goos and Dale Lonkart. The Society has benefited in past years from numerous college internships by students at Stockton, Rowan, Rutgers and Temple to name a few and has been the recipient of high school age projects through Eagle Scouts. Sam's is the first official high school internship with oversight provided by Mainland Regional High School teachers James O'Kane and Bernadette Daley.

In the Fall, Sam will attend Ursinus College in Pennsylvania with a nod toward history and museum studies.

### Volume 18 Yearbook Index

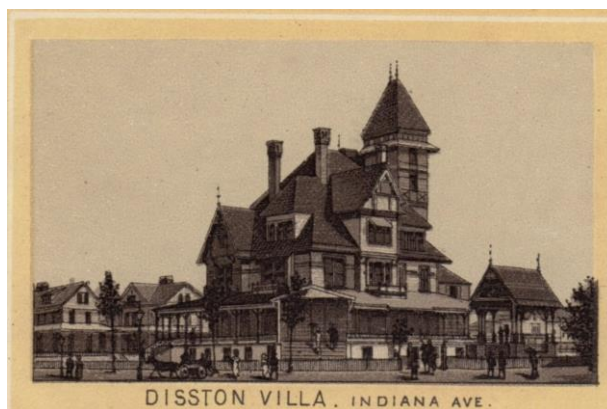
The index to Volume 18 of the Atlantic County Historical Society yearbook is now available as a digital file, and will soon be available in a printed form. The cost is \$2 per copy for either version, plus an additional \$1.50 postage to receive a hard copy.

## SOME ORIGINAL ATLANTIC CITY *continued...*

Between 1883 and 1884 there was a temporary experiment with year-round operation. In 1886 a beachfront lot between Annapolis and Richmond Avenues was purchased. 1901-1902 brought construction and occupancy of a new facility at that location. What is now known as the “Chief Franklin W. Kemp Fire Station” was constructed at Atlantic and Annapolis Avenues in part to provide fire protection to this new wooden facility. In 1945 a major bequest from the Estate of Mary Disston Roberts provided resources to begin plans for a fireproof structure which opened in 1951. The Disston Villa was a near neighbor of the original Ohio Avenue facility and will be the second image discussed in this article.

Medical economics dictated the closure of this Atlantic City facility. What began as Philadelphia philanthropy returned to Philadelphia in 1990. In 1998 the Children’s Seashore House was acquired by the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and remains part of its system.

### THE DISSTON VILLA



Henry Disston was an English-American industrialist who represents an immigration success story. He was born in Tewkesbury, England. His father invented machinery to make fine lace and was invited to Albany, New York to set up his machinery at a lace mill there. In 1833 at age 14 he arrived in Philadelphia with his father and 16 year old sister Marianna. Upon the death of his father three days after arrival, he found himself orphaned and taken in as a saw-maker’s apprentice.

In 1840 he founded the Keystone Saw Works which ultimately became the Disston Saw Works. Despite many adversities, his hard work and perseverance were ultimately rewarded. To provide materials for saw blades and other tools he built what may have been the first smelting plant for steel in America and did produce the first crucible saw steel in the country. His metallurgical expertise and innovative manufacturing techniques were highly useful to the Union’s war effort during the Civil War and his businesses prospered.

After losing his first wife in childbirth, Disston in 1843 married Port Republic girl, Mary Steelman, a descendant of Daniel Leeds. Together, they raised nine children. Mary Disston fell in love with the Atlantic City seashore. Henry Disston began investing in Atlantic City real estate and businesses. These included a saw mill and a lumber yard.

The story has it that Mary Steelman commissioned her friend, Miss S.E. Turner, to acquire the land and oversee the erection of a “cottage” at Indiana Avenue and the beachfront. It was kept as a secret and meant to be a surprise for her husband Henry. Putting current television home improvement shows to shame, the “big reveal” involved an 1872 train trip to Atlantic City on the Camden and Atlantic Railroad which brought Henry Disston and a party of friends to view what must have been quite a surprise.

Henry Disston was a model employer who never forgot his roots. He cared for his workers and was known for providing housing for them. Both Henry and Mary Disston generously supported various charities. Mary Disston Roberts did as well.

The site of the Disston Villa was purchased by the developers of the Claridge Hotel which is presently located on that property. The Ohio Avenue property of the Children’s Seashore House was purchased by Josiah White to construct the Blenheim Hotel. Bally’s demolished the Blenheim and part of its casino presently occupies this location.

*The pdf format book “Atlantic City 1885” can be obtained without charge by sending a request on the contact form found on the website for the Atlantic County Historical Society.*

**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**



907 Shore Road  
Post Office Box 301  
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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.