

ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

WINTER 2020

ATLANTIC COUNTY AND THE EPIDEMIC OF 1918

By Cindy Mason-Purdie

As we continue to cope with the deadly covid19 pandemic and confront an uncertain holiday season, I got to wondering how, or if, our forebears were able to celebrate during the Spanish Flu in 1918. I read newspapers of that year, in particular, Atlantic City's *Evening Union*, Sept. thru Dec. but was searching for a way to present "your average Joe" perspective when I stumbled upon the "diaries" of Joseph Moore in the Society's collection. Joe, as I shall refer to him, lived in Pleasantville with his wife Jennie (Ireland.) He was a union contractor in his 50's and diaries include short tidbits of information about himself, his neighbors and the world around him, and always the weather.

On Jan. 4, 1918 Joe writes: *"War, no coal, little sugar, cold weather, frozen pipes and high cost of living. We never had such a life."* He notes that the ice on Lakes Bay is 18" thick, the ground is frozen down three feet at the cemetery and bodies are stacked in the vault waiting for burial. The water pipes in the streets of Pleasantville are frozen. Schools, churches and many businesses are closed to conserve fuel, even the trolley powerhouse is running on wood. He and his wife took to living in just the kitchen and dining room. There was little or sporadic food in the shops and what was there was high priced. Each person was allotted a small amount of sugar. Winter storage of potatoes and other crops from Joe's "victory garden" were integral to living well while the country strived to feed the soldiers in training and on the battlefield.

While Joe and his neighbors were struggling in Pleasantville, a country doctor who practiced near the Army's new Camp Funston training center in rural Kansas was so concerned about a violent strain of flu he was witnessing in his patients that he contacted the US Public Health Service. In March of 1918, soldiers at Camp Funston contracted the flu in large numbers. The going theory is that this first milder wave of the virus traveled to France with the American troops and from there to other parts of the world. When the virus returned to the US at the end of the summer, again through troop movements, it had mutated into a more deadly version.

In New Jersey that summer, minds were on war. There is only sporadic work for the first half of the year and Joe gets himself hired as a carpenter at the Bethlehem Loading Company munitions plant in Mays Landing. His wages were \$44, a 6 day week, 11 hour days. He rode the electric train to Mays Landing at 6:20 am every morning and bought a monthly pass for \$6.95. The *Evening Union* Sept. 10 reported *"there are 2000 now working at Belcorville."* New Jersey at the time was a beehive of war activity with no less than 38 military installations, two shipbuilding centers and four munitions factories. At the beach there was a new attraction: German U-boats haunting the coast line. Joe noted in his diary: *"June 3 at 1:00 pm survivors from the torpedoed steamer "Texel" landed on the beach in Atlantic City in two boats and at 2:00 pm survivors from the steamer "Carolina " also beached."*

The first mention of the flu in the *Evening Union* was Sept. 14: *"Public urged to stop the spread of the influenza. Illness characterized by sudden onset, chills, fever, headache, backache, reddening and running of eyes and general prostration - the prostration is declared to be all out of proportion to the malady. Victims are stricken on the street or at the job. People should go home immediately, go to bed and call a physician without delay."* A week later it appears in Joe's notes with reference to 43 deaths and 2000 cases among soldiers at Camp Dix. On Sept. 30 the *Evening Union* reported 61 deaths that day at Camp Dix including James Campbell of Atlantic City, and the local Draft Board postponed inductions due to quarantine of Camp Dix. The flu quickly spreads to local civilians as Joe tells us on Oct. 2: *"reported several cases influenza Pville & Mays Landing, pneumonia follows, persons only live four days."*

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CLEAR WEATHER PREDICTIONS FOR THE ANNUAL ACHS YARD SALE

Following Atlantic County Historical Society's Annual Yard Sale at Risley Homestead, Northfield, in the fall of 2019 the ladies and gents of this organization began collecting, bagging, boxing and storing items to be sold in 2020. COVID came along so there was a bumper crop of treasures amassed from our stay-at-homes cleaning closets, cabinets, drawers, cellars and attics.

Like masked bandits in the o'dark thirty morning hours of Saturday, September 26th Charlene Canale, Sheryl Collins, Joan Frankel, Dale Lonkart, Mike Connor, Sid Parker, Will Rozell, Babs Perry-Silva, and Lynn Wood set up tables, organized and priced our wares. Steve Jasiocki arrived to donate his items and ended up spending the day. By sunrise we were ready for our masked and socially distancing bargain hunters. To our delight they came in droves pouring through the items displayed and selecting goodies they didn't know they wanted or needed.

And then the rains came! Everyone scattered like rats deserting a sinking ship. Our faithful volunteers splashed through the predicted "sprinkles" to rescue and store what was left of the valuable assets.

We'll see you all in the fall of 2021 with lots more bargains.



Spotlight on the Shelves

a treasure hiding in plain sight...

Since November was Native American Heritage Month, we would like to highlight some books on our shelves that pertain to the history and legacy of Native American culture.

For those who may be unaware, New Jersey was home to many Native American tribes, whose names were based on geographical locations and language dialects. Atlantic County is known mostly for their concentration of Unami (south of Toms River) tribes including the [Lenni]- Lenape ("original, real people") and the Absegami ("little water").

Native Americans took great interest in storytelling, as each language differed with location and language was solely audible. Some themes seem to be universal amongst all tribes, with them each maintaining their own interpretation, while other characters emerge only within groups in a certain area. The Lenape in particular were associated with the turtle ("Unami" translated), which upon research into their mythology, is considered the foundation of Creation (our version of Adam and Eve). John Bierhorst's book, *Mythology of the Lenape (on our shelf as E2012 Bio)*, thoroughly details some of the oral traditions and stories derived from Lenape heritage.

The history in our area is so rich that an abundance of our localities are named after various Lenape Indian attributes. In our library, you will find a book entitled, *The Lenape-Delaware Indian Heritage* (on our shelf as E2296), which delves deep into every aspect of Lenape life from Paleo-era to 2000 AD. Although the year 1524 was the first documented sighting of the Lenape, their aborigine ancestors date back to 10,000 B.C.! The very ground on which we step foot everyday had been cultivated for thousands of years by our local Native American tribes. In short, as American settlers, we essentially owe our lives to the indigenous inhabitants of this land.

Brittani Mazzone

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Missing Ruth Nierenberg



The Veterans History Project Team members were saddened to learn of the passing of Ruth Nierenberg, our longtime transcriber of our Veterans interviews.

Ruth was born in Washington, D.C. and educated in New York City from middle school through graduate school. She earned a Masters Degree in social work and spent most of her career working with Veterans in the Federal Veterans Administration Medical Centers and NJS employment facilities.

Following her retirement, she became an active volunteer for the Veterans History Project. Ruth listened to and transcribed almost four hundred VHP interviews conducted since 2007. Her last communication with us proclaimed how proud she was to be a part of the Veterans History Project.

COVID UPDATE: The Society remains closed to the public until further notice and probably will not reopen until after March 31, 2021. Appointments for research may be requested, **BY EMAIL ONLY.**

ACHSinfo@comcast.net

Arrangements will be made based on volunteer availability.

Please visit our website for additional information on a reopening date:

www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org



IN MEMORIAM

Don Nyce, William R Crimbring,
Joseph L. Connor, Ruth Nierenberg

LIFE MEMBER,
Dawson Constant Smith

Welcome

The Atlantic County Historical Society
is pleased to welcome and thank our
newest members:

Maureen Donaghy, *Doylestown, PA*
Roderick & Kathleen Simons, *Lorton, VA*
Blanche Connolly, *Manahawkin, NJ*
Diane Kummings, *Northfield, NJ*



AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU!

Friends \$1 - \$49

Edwin & Barbara Kroger, Robert & Lynne Warner,
Frances Brewin, Nancy Thinschmidt, Elinor Veit,
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Contributors to this Issue:

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CONVENTION HALL AND THE CAR RADIO

by Michael Connor

Atlantic City's original Convention Hall - now known as Boardwalk Hall - has been the venue of numerous noteworthy events. Among many other things it has hosted presidential conventions and the beginnings of indoor football. The latter did require a shortened end zone at the stage; players could run under the balcony on the Boardwalk side. Prior to the building of the new Convention Center, the most frequent event at Convention Hall has always been a trade show. In 1930 the Radio Manufacturers Association convened there. A visionary entrepreneur brought his concept of a car radio to attempt to generate sales. How that happened and some additional historical background comprise the subject of this article

In 1929 William Lear and Elmer Wavering drove their girlfriends to a lookout above the Mississippi River in Quincy, Illinois, ostensibly to view the sunset. [Those of us who grew up at the shore were known to have taken our girlfriends to a secluded saltwater view to watch the submarine races.] While there, one of the ladies remarked that the evening would be even nicer if they could listen to music in the car. Inspiration struck and Lear and Wavering with the later assistance of Paul Galvin developed the first commercially viable car radio.

Both Lear and Wavering had previous radio experience. They operated a radio supply company. Lear served in the US Navy during World War 1 as a radio operator. Paul Galvin and his brother founded Galvin Manufacturing Corporation whose primary product was the manufacture of the Stewart Battery Eliminator. At the time almost all radios were powered by dry cell batteries and not household current. The Battery Eliminator converted house current to the DC voltage used by home radios. It was the grandfather of the ubiquitous "power bricks" we see with many of the computers and other electronic devices which we use today.

Below is a picture of a battery eliminator.



One could not simply take a household radio powered by a dry cell battery and move it to a car. Those of us who grew up with AM radio remember that we often listened to more static than music. Lear and Wavering's contribution was to relentlessly eliminate all sources of static caused by a vehicle's ignition and spark plugs while also making a compact radio robust enough to withstand the rigors of the road.

Meanwhile, Paul Galvin saw his battery eliminator going the way of the buggy whip. More households had electricity and radio manufacturers were making radios which ran on AC current. Galvin needed a new product to manufacture. Fortune led Galvin to meet Lear and Wavering at a radio convention in Chicago. When he saw their prototype car radio he saw a business opportunity in its manufacture.

The inventors continued their efforts to perfect the car radio in Galvin's factory and when satisfied installed their creation in Galvin's Studebaker. Galvin then went to a local banker for financing. It did not go well. To demonstrate the radio, one was installed in the banker's Packard. When the Packard caught fire a half hour after installation, the loan was not forthcoming.

Galvin had a "Plan B." In June, 1930, together with his wife Lillian he drove to the Radio Manufacturers Association which was meeting at Atlantic City Convention Hall. His Studebaker had a radio with the latest improvements installed. Lacking funds to rent a convention booth, he parked outside on the Boardwalk street end and cranked up the radio sound to attract attention. He also solicited listeners inside Convention Hall. One can infer that the police were interested enough not to have him towed. He attracted enough attention and orders to allow his company to barely survive the depression.

Galvin needed a brand name for his car radio. Taking inspiration from entertainment products that used the suffix "ola" in their names such as Radiola, Victrola, Columbiola and Moviola, Galvin decided to brand his radio as Motorola. In 1947 Galvin's entire company was renamed "Motorola" and continues in business under that name today.

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CONVENTION HALL AND THE CAR RADIO *continued...*

While car radios today are factory installed expectations, they began as an expensive aftermarket installation.

Below are images of that original car radio and some early advertising.



Who knows where a woman's inspiration will ultimately lead? Eli Wavering stayed with the company which ultimately became Motorola. That company's inventions include police radios, the first handheld two-way radio whose name morphed from Handie-Talkie to walkie-talkie, the first pager and the first handheld cell phone. Wavering personally developed the first automotive alternator while at Motorola. William Lear continued as an inventor. The eighth grade dropout made note-

worthy contributions to aviation technology. He invented the airplane radio direction finder, contributed to the invention of the autopilot, and designed the first fully automatic aircraft landing system. His most famous invention is the Lear Jet. Back in the day we all listened to the eight-track tape players he invented.

This amazing technological journey began with a wish made while watching a Mississippi sunset and a trip to Convention Hall.

1918 EPIDEMIC *continued...*

Avoid crowds. This was the first point of advice to escape the flu in 1918, however communities continued to have public events to promote the purchase of Liberty Bonds to help fund the war. On Sept. 28 Atlantic City held a rally on the Boardwalk but on the same day Philadelphia held a parade that would become legendary in terms of a "superspreader." More than 200,000 people jammed together to watch the parade. Health officials estimate 12,000 deaths directly linked to that event. Atlantic City held its own rally on the 28th and other public events to raise funds for Liberty Bonds which helped to fund the war. On Oct. 6 NJ Governor Walter Edge ordered the statewide closing of all churches, theatres, pool rooms, saloons, soda fountains etc., any places where people congregate.

Joe's remarks during Oct. are particularly gut wrenching: *"Number of burials at Atlantic City cemetery today 11, one family of 8 in Atlantic City, 7 have died of flu; Clark's Lumber Co making coffins such demand because of the epidemic; 6 funerals at Atlantic City Cemetery today, 21 in one day last week; Undertaker Parcels had 11 funerals yesterday; 17 burials at Atlantic City Cemetery today, one grave dug for father, mother and 2 sons; a hearse went by with 3 white caskets."* A plea from Atlantic City Mayor Bacharach appears in the Evening Union on Oct.14 seeking nurses to assist with caring for influenza patients and to be put on the city payroll. He also sought women to assist in caring for families struck down with flu, especially caring for children where one or both of the parents are stricken. Eight Catholic nuns from convents in the city volunteered their services as nurses for the duration of the epidemic. A snapshot of the grim impact of the epidemic on Atlantic County life.

The state reopened at the end of Oct. Newspapers began to mention Christmas shopping. Due to wartime restrictions people were asked to give only "useful" gifts except for young children. No hiring of seasonal help was allowed, store hours were restricted for fuel conservation. Only one box per soldier is permitted to be sent to the troops. Then on Nov. 11 the armistice was signed silencing the guns on the battlefield. There is jubilation! Atlantic City threw together a parade the next day with an extremely long list of participants. A Thanksgiving proclamation from NJ Gov. Edge appeared in the newspaper that was primarily focused on the war's end. There were no other references to the holiday. Joe got discharged from Bethlehem Loading Company as production was dialed back. War restrictions on sugar and wheat began to be lifted which no doubt delighted holiday bakers. Although Joe's notes tell us that the flu continued to take lives in Pville and Atlantic City through most of Dec., he and his wife survived and many of the neighborhood boys came home from France. On Christmas Day Joe wrote *"Xmas singers out before daylight singing sweet carols, grand young folk, Pville. Grand dinner, turkey, pound cake, fruit and many good things. Thankful to God for all."* For the many thousands of families who lost loved ones to war and sickness in 1918, the holidays would be bittersweet.

Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

Emma Doughty's Journey West to Ohio

Editor's Note: This letter was written by Emma A. Doughty after she and her family left Absecon to make a new home in Ohio. Postmarked May 3, 1837, from Cincinnati, Ohio, it is addressed to "My dear Sisters," who were in fact her sisters-in-law, Sarah and Charlotte Doughty, the wives of her husband's brothers, Nathaniel and Enoch. This is probably the Emma Doughty referred to in Ann Frost's July 17, 1836, letter from Mount Carmel, Ill., just 9 1/2 months before Emma set off on her own tiresome trek west across the mountains. (See Atlantic Heritage, Fall 2020.) Though a tedious journey, Emma also conveys a sense of excitement and contentment.

This letter is housed in Manuscript Box 29, Leroy Tilton Papers, where one can find both the original letter turning brown with age in Emma's thread-like handwriting, and its transcription. This copy was taken from the transcription. (MB 29, folder 4a (original), folder 40 (transcription).)

Cincinnati May 1st 1837

My dear Sisters I sit down to inform you that we arrived in Cincinnati on the 20th of April I cannot say anything as to our prospects here only I can give you a little scetch of our journey so far, we started on Monday from Philladelphia, as I expect you have herd, we had to buy a new horse a match for tobe he proved an excellent beast, him and tobe took our large stage with all of us and trunks and considerable baggage with all ease up and down the mountains.....39 miles was the farthest we drove in a day and that we done over the mountains, some of the mountains were 8 miles some 6 some 3 and 4 it took us all day to go round.....the road about wide enough for a waggon to pass you.....a rough road to wher you were driveing down one side of the mountain it looks as if you going rite off it seemed all most imposible to help it, then you had to turn short round, but even in these mountains we would find handsome settlements plenty of taverns and in the villages considerable stores plenty provisions cheeper in these villages after we left Philladelphiawe met a great many droves of cattle hogs horses 5 or 6 hundred in a drove.....we found it very expensive travelling tolls never so frequent and high, bridges 75 cts a waggon the susquehannah we crossed at Columbia the bridge appeared more than a mile long.....the Juniatta that we crossed 4 times was not so long bridges, the Monongahela we crossed on a raft we crosed no more rivers of any account the next was the Ohio were we took boat at Weeling and came from in 2 days and nights, wich would of took us better than 2 weeks by land we had some very agreable famelies on board the captain was a very fine man all hands seem to attend to there jobs the boat was very heavy loaded they had to carry the more steam of course they would stop in the night and let the steam off it would roar like thunder the boat seemed as if it was comeing all to pieces you may expect I did not sleep may I not say we have had a tedious journey and tiresome it is true but see how many dangers the Lord has brought us through and not an axident has happened of any account we all had very bad colds and coughs owing to change of weatter.....I thought before I started I should be afrad on the road the people on the road and here are very friendly and sociable they all appear to wish to help you in every way they can Mr James Blachmansⁱ betsy looks better than ever she did.....Daniel and Elisabeth Abner and Edward [Emma's husband and three of their children] are gone to help Jim Ule move to the Egharbour settlement.....I have told all the bad now I will tell some of the good Elegant buildings and hundreds of farms all through the state of Pennsylvania some of the principal towns we came through were Lancaster Columbia Little York Oxford Gettysburg Chambersburg Lauden Fayetvile Bedford Washington Claysvile then to Wheeling.....Cincin is a very lively place I cant pretend to say how many steamboats are at the warf daily discharging and takeing in goods.....tell Rebecca Smith I shall write to her as soon as I can but I tell you it is no easy job for me to get my thoughts collected enough to write I don't expect you can hardly read this scrall..... from yours as ever

Sincerely Emma A Doughty

[letter continues]

.....we talk of moveing to Bataviaⁱⁱ on a farm for this somer as it is to late to go down the river every one tells us we would be sure to take the Fever they are all anxious for us to come out there it will not be very near the

Continued on page 7

Looking Back through the Files..... *continued:*

Settlement Elisabeth says the Egharbour people have brought there pride with them to this country they are as dressy as Abseconers I am truly sorry to hear it I was in hopes of getting were there was not so much dressing and fuss about fashions I forgot to tell you that I have the comfort of setting in my rocking chair to rite.....it came safe with the exception of a little place of the rocker broke of behind.....we have not onpact our boxes to see wetter our dishes and things are broke as we expect to move shortly. Give my love to your father family [Parker Clark] and send werd to Mother when you have an opportunity that we are all well and very well satisfied as we can be in our unsettled state.....our children have just come in from seeing a balloon start is now going over our house looks about as large as a bucket.....write soon all of you and don't wait for us as you [know] our situation moveing from place now come nearly 1000 miles some say it is Our love to Enoch and Nathaniel

Address: Stamped
post mark
Cincinnati O
May 3

Mrs
Sarah Doughty
Egg harbour Absecome State of New Jersey
County of Gloucester

ⁱ *Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook, Vol. 10, No. 4, "Enoch Doughty Bible Records", p. 163: "Enoch Doughty & Charlotte Clark was married by James Blackman Esqr. January 15th one thous. eight hun. & Sixteen."*

ⁱⁱ Louis H. Everts, *History of Clermont County, Ohio, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers*, 1880, facing p. 9 – map shows the location of Batavia in the center of Clermont County, Ohio.
This reference is found in ACHS Collection Box 14, folder 28.



Original map of Clermont Co., Ohio, 1880, accessed Nov. 4, 2020 on <https://babel.hathitrust.org>



Risley Homestead takes a hit! This is the result of tropical storm **Isais** which hit South Jersey on August 4th.



October 15th: The new flagpole at the historic home in Northfield, which is owned by ACHS.

**ATLANTIC COUNTY
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**ATLANTIC COUNTY
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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.