

ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

FALL 2026



A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE...

by Sid Parker

Bob Warrington, member extraordinaire, regularly bids on photos of special interest which he donates to various organizations and, because he has roots to the area, we have been the lucky recipient of several photos which we have highlighted in recent newsletters. Below are two of his latest contributions.

The photo on the left offers a unique 1920's background view of the boardwalk while a flapper named Drusilla poses atop a beachfront hotel in Atlantic City. A notation on the back of the photo indicated it was a 12 story hotel. Mike Connor, trustee and volunteer, identified it as The Breakers, a 12 story hotel, which also had a 5 story facade on top and which made Drusilla's pose even more of a statement. Note the smile on her face.....can you imagine? Hopefully, a large check awaited her descent to terra firma.

The photo on the right, shows Bill Haley in June 1955 on the boardwalk in front of Steel Pier where he and The Comets were appearing. With him is songwriter, Frank Pingatore, who, with Haley, composed "Two Hound Dogs." Appearing with the two men are hound dogs, Rhythm and Blues. More well known were the hits "Rock Around the Clock", "Shake, Rattle and Roll" and "Skinny Minnie." Surely, some of our readers remember them with a nostalgic smile. Incidentally, in 1955, the cost to see Bill Haley and The Comets was \$1.00. One thin dollar. Eight bits. Another nostalgic smile, yes?

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.

Yard Sale

Saturday, Sept. 19th - 8:00am – 2:00pm
(Rain date, September 26th)

Many items for sale,
including extra Library books.

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



HOLIDAY SWEET SALE

Saturday
December 19th
12:00pm – 3:00pm
Atlantic County
Historical Society
907 Shore Road
Somers Point

Saturday, October 17, 2026, 11:30am

Crab Trap Restaurant
2 Broadway, Somers Point
Cost: \$32.00/per person

ACHS ANNUAL LUNCHEON Members and the general public are invited. **Members will vote on nominees to the 2027-2028 Governing Board at this time.** Following the installation of the nominees to the governing Board, “The “Bringing History to Life Award” will be presented. **Contact ACHS to purchase tickets. Check Facebook or the ACHS website for more info.**

At the July Meeting of the Governing Board, the following were presented and accepted for election at our annual meeting:

Vice-President: Cindy Mason-Purdie
Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt
Treasurer: Charlene Canale
Curator (Interim): MarySue Lovett
Assistant Librarian: Kathy Fritz

Trustees:

Megan Ernst, Will Rozell Lynn Wood

Members will vote on nominees to the 2027-2028 Governing Board at the Annual Luncheon.

The Atlantic County Historical Society
will be closed September 19th, October 17th
and November 26th – November 28th

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

Need to Contact Us?

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website www.achsnj.org

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Ellen Hyatt

Contributors to this Issue:

Sid Parker, Kathleen Pullan, Diane Miller & Lynn Wood,

*The Atlantic County Historical Society has received special project grants
from the Atlantic County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.*

Member News

Welcome

NEW MEMBERS

Douglas L Leeds, *Star, ID*
Jim & Rosemary Evans, *Somers Pt., NJ*
L. Michael Kaas, *Arlington, VA*
Vincent Male, *Egg Harbor Twp., NJ*
Ken Kramer &
Elizabeth Dalzell, *Atlantic City, NJ*
Joseph Picard, *Galloway, NJ*

In Memoriam

Long-time members

John H. Dilks, III
Joseph M. Hiers., Jr.



Another Successful ACHSBook Sale!



Donations

Friends \$1 - \$49

Betsy Naylor, Sheryl Collins, Joyce Poley,
Michael Kaas, Paul Schopp, Debbie Polk

Patrons \$50 - \$249

Carol Zepfel, Patty Lipshultz,
Diane Miller, MarySue Lovett, Steve Jasiecki,
Judy LaDrew Bayer, MarySue Lovett,
Sally Pietrofitta, Seth Grossman, Mike Connor,
Judy Braddock Smith, Mary Peterson,
Tere & Gene Doebley, Rick & Millie Traa
Wayne & Megan Ernst, Karen Lonkart,
Dale Lonkart ~ *IHO* ACHS Volunteers,
Charlene Canale ~ *IMO* Cathy Berkly,
Susan Reitmeyer ~ *IMO* Walter F. Reitmeyer, Jr.,
Bruce Guthrie ~ *IMO* Leslie Anne Conover Guthrie,
Judy Schwartz ~ *IMO* Olga & Al Amole,
Bruce & Barbara Aydelotte ~
IMO Edward Stephenson,
Bob & Carol Warrington ~
IMO James T. Warrington, Jr.,
George & Carol Guiliano ~
IMO Pat Parker & *IHO* Sid Parker,
Dale Lonkart ~ *IMO* Barbara Kroger,
Rosemary & Michael Wallace ~
IHO Cain & Wallace Families,

Sponsor \$250 - \$1000

Sid Parker ~ *IMO* Pat Parker & All Veterans,
General Lafayette Chapter, D.A.R.,
Michael O'Brien
Babs Perry-Silva ~ *IMO* Don & Carolyn Perry

CHANGE OF PLANS: The City of Somers Pt. 86-ed our plan/hope for an LED message board out front--we're now in a historic district. So, Trustee Dana Shupp with help from President Sid Parker will "fix" the old sign to make it "more user friendly" and add some fresh paint to the posts.

Taking the Deep Dive into Historical Newspapers

by Kathleen Pullan Watkins

Hands down, it was the best “discovery” of my genealogic journey! It happened the day that I realized that the Press of Atlantic City has an online archive dating back to 1895. Ancestry, Family Search and other genealogic records sites are terrific, offering census, church, military, court and immigration documents that give us the timelines of our forebearers lives. Add in DNA analysis and we can prove ancestral ties and connections to relations we never knew we had, but historic newspaper research offers an entirely different connection to the past.

By the time I located the Press Archive, I had already linked my Ancestry account to newspapers.com and found a few family-related articles, but the floodgates opened wide with the Press. They would open wider still when I fully understood the best techniques for searching historic newspapers.

In the days before radio, television and the internet, newspapers were the public’s sole connection to political, economic, and social happenings. Few details were spared in the reporting of current events and in notices of births, deaths, weddings and funerals. Notable birthdays and anniversaries made the paper, along with trips taken, out-of-town visitors, along with crimes, property sold, bankruptcies, and will probates.

Through the Press and other archives my ancestors’ day-to-day activities were spread out before me like a roadmap. There was information revealing aspects of their lives previously unknown, like an aunt’s first marriage or a great-grandfather’s professional scandals. I learned about the causes they supported and details of their social lives. Always an advocate of knowing the truth, these revelations, while occasionally shocking, were always welcomed.

As my father’s family history had been somewhat elusive, my newspapers search soon had me looking outside of Atlantic County for additional news sources. I was rewarded with incredible finds. American and European ancestors of the 19th and even late 18th centuries were fleshed out, once again living beings. I could clearly see their connection to me and influence on my life. The impact of my historic newspaper searches has been felt by others in my family, as when I found an 1860 article from *The Opelousas Courier* (Louisiana) concerning the sale as a slave of my husband’s 4th great-grandfather.

I have learned there are ways to make searches of historic newspapers more successful.

Name variation - don’t assume that the spelling of a family surname was consistent. If unable to find anything using the traditional spelling, search using variations. My father’s ancestors’ name has been spelled Pulleyn, Pulein, Pullen, Pullon and Pullan. It was common to mix up first names of family members, so check the names of others in the family when searching for a particular individual. Sometimes a person is described only as “wife of”, “son of” or “daughter of”, rather than by name.

Date Accuracy - when you search historic newspapers you are usually asked to enter a date range. If nothing is located using the timeframe you associate with your ancestor, set your search parameters for a decade on either side or remove the dates entirely. Records in the past for dates of births and deaths were often inaccurate.

Location - if unable to find news articles in a known hometown, widen the search by county, adjoining counties, then by state and adjoining states.

Set Search Alerts - many sites will allow you to set an alert. That is, to let you know if an article using your search terms becomes available later. As newly digitized newspapers are being added every day, it is worthwhile to set an alert. Many of the searches are done by artificial intelligence and the technology is improving daily. What is not located today, may be discovered tomorrow.

Nationwide, there are people devoted to the conservation of historic newspapers. They offer glimpses into the past of cultural norms, influences and ideas, fashion, and entertainment. They can only be fully preserved for future generations by digitizing them (scanning and turning them into readable, searchable files). Our Atlantic County Historical Society recently added digitized versions of many years of the Pleasantville Press and The Ventnor News to its collection. If you have local family history, stop by and start searching.

The Library of Congress provided grants to institutions willing to undertake this important work. In New Jersey, Caryn Radick, directed the NJ Digital Newspaper Project at Rutgers University.

Continued on page 7

Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

Editor's Note: Nestled among thousands of documents in the ACHS Manuscript Box Collection is a handwritten list dated Sept. 24, 1776 composed primarily of deeds. The Society's digital catalogue describes it as deeds left for safekeeping by Richard Somers during the Revolutionary War in 1776 with Isaac Kay of Haddonfield. Historian Sarah W. R. Ewing described it as a list of 49 original papers, which included 22 deeds, 3 wills, 2 warrants, surveys, etc. [i] The original document is housed in Manuscript Box 12, folder 1099, Mrs. W. Shaffer Smith Collection.

We can't help but wonder what might have caused Richard Somers to entrust valuable papers to someone in Haddonfield which was often a rallying point for troops during the American Revolution. Was he preparing to go to war himself? Or can this protective action be seen as evidence of the vulnerability felt by coastal Patriots as nearby bays and rivers were plied by enemy ships.

We know that defensive fortifications were built along the coast at Somers Point. Evidence of these forts is found in the pension applications of Revolutionary War soldiers. Among them is the 1832 affidavit of Zephaniah Steelman, where he attests to marching to Somers Point [probably in October 1778.] Here, Colonel Thomas Proctor [of the Continental Army] was directing two small forts to be built. "I stood by when Col. Proctor drew the lines to make the works and forts by. I assisted in throwing up the outer section and when we finished them, Col. Proctor had a brass piece. I think four or six pounder..." [ii]

It wasn't always the British, however, which caused trouble for the Patriots. According to a Somers Point tradition, "...at one time during the Revolutionary War, Colonel Proctor planted his artillery so near the brick Mansion Friend John Somers thought it best to gather his live stock in close quarters; but in doing so forgot his tame wild geese which he set great store by and next morning, to his mortification and sorrow, found their bones where the soldiers had roasted and feasted on them during the night." [iii]

The next question is – Who was Isaac Kay in whom Richard Somers placed so much trust?

The Kay family were among the first settlers in the area which became Haddonfield. Originally a part of the Newton Colony, it was started by Quakers from Ireland and England in 1681-82. Four generations of Isaac Kays lived in the neighborhood, all probably operating the mill, with the first Isaac dying in 1757. [iv] The name Isaac Kay is found repeatedly in the Minutes of Haddonfield Monthly Meeting [v], so like the Somers, the Kays were Quakers.

In 1779, Isaac Kay appears on a January tax list in Newtown Township, Gloucester, County [vi]. His name is also on a 2 Dec 1782 petition from the inhabitants of Newton Township seeking passage of a law permitting a tax to repair the highways. [vii]

A direct tie between the two is a receipt to Isaac Kay, Esq. for purchasing land from Richard Somers. Dated 12 Aug 1779, it was for "a certain cedar Swamp on Penney Pot Lieng in three Tracts containing Sixty and a half Acres..." [viii]

Finally, according to Ewing, Isaac Kay was a member of the General Assembly of New Jersey for Gloucester County" [ix]

The document's handwritten cover page tells us it is "An account of Deeds Left with Isaac Kay Haddonfield Sept 24 1776."

The careful listing written by Isaac Kay begins with the words: "Rec'd in Charge for the use of Richard Somers a Bundle of Deeds, etc., which I Promise to Deliver to him on his Order or Demand."

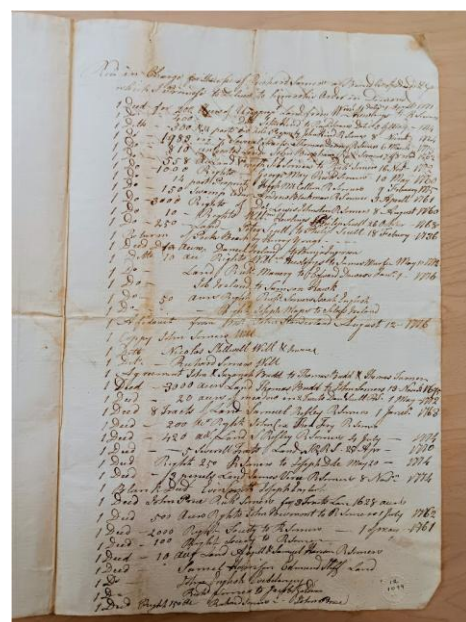
The transcribed list follows. Information in brackets was added by this transcriber.

- 1 Deed for 200 Acres of Unappropd. Land from Wm. Hewlings to R Somers Dated 1 Aprall 1771
- 1 Do. - - 400 - Ditto from John Hind to Rich'd Somers Dated 5 of May 1774
- 1 Ditto -- 300 & 32 parts one hole Property John Hind R Somers 8 November 1774
- 1 Do - 1983 in of Several Tracts Thomas Denney R Somers 6 March 1773
- 1 Do - 810 unlocated Land John Bingham to Rich'd Somers 7 of 8 month 1762
- 1 Do - 558 Acres Land & marsh [?] Job Somers to Rich'd Somers 16 Nov 1772
- 1 Do - 1000 Rights George May Rich'd Somers 10 May 1760
- 1 Do - 14 part Propriety Hugh McCollum to R Somers 9 February 1775
- 1 Do - 150 Swamp Cedar Andrew Blackman R Somers 3 Aprall 1761
- 1 Do - 3000 Rights of Do! Lewis Johnston R Somers 8 August 1760

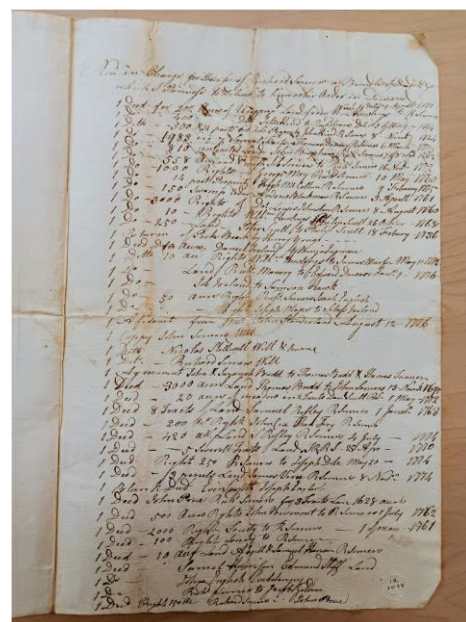
Continued on page 6

Looking Back through the Files.....continued

- 1 Do - 10 Rights Willm. Hewlings Philip Scull 26 October 1768
- 1 Do - 250 - Land Peter Scull to Philip Scull 18 February 1736
- 1 Return of Pecks Beach by Henry Yongs
- 1 Deed [?] Acres Daniel Ireland to Benjn. Ingerson
- 1 Ditto 10 acres Rights Willm. Hewlings to James Murfee May 10 1772
- 1 Do - Land Rich'd Manery to Edward Davas[?] Jan. 1 1776
- 1 Do - Job Ireland to Samson Hawk
- 1 Do - 50 acres Rights Rich'd Somers Isaah English
- 1 Do - - Rights Joseph Mapes to Siluss Ireland
- 1 Affidavit from Mr. John Standerland August 12 1776
- 1 Copy John Somers Will
- 1 Ditto Nicolas Stillwell Will & Invoice
- 1 Ditto Richard Somers Will
- 1 Agreement John & Suzanah Budd to Thomas Budd & Thomas Turner
- 1 Deed - 3000 acres Land Thomas Budd to John Somers 13 November 1695
- 1 Deed - 20 acres of meadow in 2 Tracts Danl. Scull RS 1 May 1772
- 1 Deed 8 Tracts of Land Samuel Risley R Somers 1 January 1763
- 1 Deed - 200 acres Rights John Cox Thom Fry [?] R Somers
- 1 Deed - 420 acres Land S Risley R Somers 4 July 1774
- 1 Deed - 5 Severall Tracts Land SR, RS 25 Apr 1770
- 1 Deed Rights 250 R Somers to Joseph Dole May 20 1774
- 1 Deed - 3 parcels Land James Veree R Somers 8 Nov 1774
- 1 Blank Deed Evi Smith Joseph English
- 1 Deed John Price Rich'd Somers for 3 Tracts Land 1628 acres
- 1 Deed 500 Acres Rights John Beumont [?] to R Somers 1 July 1762
- 1 Deed - 2000 Rights Society to R Somers 1 of May 1761
- 1 Deed - 100 Rights Society to R Somers
- 1 Deed - 10 acres Land Abgill & Samuel Harison R Somers
- 1 Deed - Samuel Harrison Edmund Iliff Land
- 1 Do - John English Evi belangey
- 1 Do - Rich'd Somers to Jacob Golden
- 1 Deed Rights 150 ac Richard Somers John Price
- 1 Deed 221 acres Rights [?] Francais[?] to Constant Somers
- 1 Deed 500 ac Rights George May R Somers
- 1 Deed 1 acres & half R Somers to Hezekiah Scull
- 1 Deed Ebenezer Towell Richard Somers Right
- 1 Deed Thomas Deney Esqr. 86 acres old Swamp R Somers
- 1 Deed Wilm. Hewlings to S Risley Rights
- 1 Hind to Rich'd Somers 200 acres Rights



First page of handwritten list



Cover dated Sept. 24, 1776

- [i] Sarah W. R. Ewing, "Atlantic County During the American Revolution," *Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 8 No. 1, p. 30.
- [ii] Marilyn and Norman Goos, "Gloucester County Militia Revolutionary War Applications," *Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 18 No. 2, p. 147.
- [iii] Sarah Ewing Collection, *Somers Point Traditions*, Collection Box 6, folder 44o.
- [iv] Historical Society of Haddonfield, *This Is Haddonfield*, 1963, p. 16 & 144, ACHS Call No. C118.1.
- [v] Monthly Meeting: *Haddonfield Monthly Meeting*; Archive Reference: EE 137; Ancestry.com, U.S. *Hinshaw Index to Selected Quaker Records, 1680-1940*.
- [vi] Ancestry.com, *New Jersey, U.S., Compiled Census and Census Substitutes Index, 1643-1890*.
- [vii] Ancestry.com, *U.S. Census Reconstructed Records, 1660-1820*.
- [viii] Barry-Hayes Papers, maintained at Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, PA, accessed Digital Library @ Villanova University.
- [ix] Ewing, p 30.

REVOLUTIONARY LIVES

ACHS hosted a traveling exhibit produced by the State of New Jersey. Large panels representing stories of colonial men and women were on display during July.



Historical Newspapers *continued* ...

A shout-out to Caryn and others like her, whose passionate engagement make this access to our past possible.

There are few downsides to using historic newspapers as part of a genealogical search, however not all sites are free. Some provide limited access for a nominal fee, and I have found this useful if unsure what I will find. Start out small and decide later how worthwhile it is to invest in a subscription.

A few sites, like Fulton History, do not allow you to “clip and print” an article. It must be transcribed by the researcher. From my vantage point, that is a small sacrifice. In every other way, if you are committed to a better understanding of family history, the rewards of spending time with archival newspapers cannot be overstated.

Resources*

British Newspaper Archive (britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) subscription

Chronicling America (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov) free

Fulton History (fultonhistory.com) free

Genealogy Bank (genealogybank.com) free trial, followed by subscription fee

Newspapers.com (newspapers.com) subscription

Pennsylvania Newspaper Archive (panewsarchive.psu.edu) free

Pleasantville Press and Ventnor News, Mainland Journal (1928-1960), (available through Atlantic County Historical Society) free and through Chronicling America (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov) free

Press of Atlantic City Archive

(pressofatlanticcity.newsbank.com) day/weekly/monthly subscription

*Other historic newspaper sites available



Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

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Assistant Librarian: Kathy Fritz

Curator: (interim) Mary Sue Lovett

Asst. Curator: (vacant)

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

**ATLANTIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**



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**MEMBERSHIP
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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.