

# BROADSIDE

Spring & Summer 1987

## The Aqueduct Story

*In our last issue we began the story of the Aqueduct, written by Ida W. Engelke, which we continue here.*

On May 29, 1809, an advertisement carrying the names of "Cooley and Scudder" appeared in the **Trenton Federalist** stating that "The business of breaking and carding wool will be carried on this season by John McDonald at Scudder's Mills, situate about 2 miles from Princeton and near the Turnpike Road leading from Trenton to New Brunswick."

On February 26, 1836 an interesting item in the **Princeton Whig** reported the sale of real estate belonging to Isaac Scudder as follows; "That noted Grist Mill Dwelling House and Store Houses long known as Scudder's Mills, together with dwelling houses for tenants—and also about one hundred acres of valuable land ... The land being of first quality, about twenty-five acres of which is woodland, well covered with hickory and oak timber, which, when the timber is taken off, will make excellent tillable land."

After being operated by a number of people, the mill was purchased by Dr. Hunt. He tore it down and built another. His daughter, Isabel Gray (later, Mrs. Charles Robinson) took over the property. James C. Engelke was the last to use it as a grist mill. Around 1900 it stopped working except for a brief period when it was used to manufacture ice.

The First Baptist Church of Princeton, then a church with a black congregation, used the Millstone River near the mill for baptismal purposes.

After the store was abandoned as a store, it was for a time used as a Wednesday night prayer meeting place where students from Princeton Theological Seminary conducted prayer meetings. These were well attended. Miss Araminta Williamson, my father's sister, opened and closed the building, laid out the hymn books, started fire in the little stove and kept the place presentable. When the meetings stopped she was presented with a sterling silver watch as a token of appreciation for her work. That watch is now in my possession. It is still running.

Later, when the lake was built, the store building was given to George Williamson who moved it up to his property. It was never a private dwelling. After the death of his daughter, Dr. Mabel R. Williamson, the property

was purchased by Mr. Clare, and now is an architect's office.

With the mill, the Gray family owned the large three-story house where they lived on the corner of the road to Kingston and across from the mill. They also owned the large frame house next to it on the same side of the road. These were beautiful homes. After her husband's death, Mrs. Robinson, nee Miss Isabel Gray, lived there with her maid, Miss Mary Richmond. When Miss Richmond died, Miss Jenny Connor, a practical nurse, stayed with her. After Mrs. Robinson's death, both homes were made into apartment houses.

Across the road were four dwellings. Next to the mill was what we called the "old Cudgel house." Mr. and Mrs. Cudgel were a much respected black couple. Mrs. Cudgel, who smoked a clay pipe, was a never-ending source of wonder to me.

Next to this was the property of George Williamson which he bought and lived in after his marriage to Elizabeth Richards, daughter of Captain Richard Richards of Civil War fame. Their daughter was Mabel Richards Williamson, for several years principal of the Plainsboro School. About 1900 Uncle George added a room to the side of the house and used it as a general store.

Next to this property was a stone house — a double house with a porch on each side that went up to the second floor. The first floor of each dwelling was partially below ground level and had a dirt floor. Various families lived here including the Fenimores, the Wasilucskis and the Hamills.

The oldest existing building in the village of Aqueduct is the original Williamson family home. My grandfather, Elbert S. Williamson purchased the property about 1844 when Araminta, my aunt, was two years old. They had previously lived in a house, now torn down, on the corner of Harrison Street, almost opposite what is now or formerly the home of Mrs. Little.

At the time of Araminta's birth, no name had been selected for her and the parents were still undecided. The Indian woman who was helping to care for my grandmother said "Name her Araminta" — an Indian word for "princess." So that became her name. She was the oldest of twelve children, one of whom — William — died when he was eleven. My grandmother was Elizabeth

Richards, the sister of Captain Richard Richards.

The Williamson family record was traced by Frank Babcock, my father's cousin, for my uncle Dr. Alexander Williamson, one of the earliest physicians to settle permanently in Asbury Park. Dr. Alexander Williamson's name is recorded in the National Register of the Society of the American Revolution.

The father of Lawrence Williamson came from a town named Norden in Holland about 1663. The name was originally spelled Wilemsen. Records of Lawrence Williamson were lost in the burning of the Reformed Dutch Church at Six Mile Run in the Franklin Park Area.

Lawrence's son William was born in 1716 and died in 1799. In 1750 he was elected an elder in the Reformed Dutch Church at New Brunswick. He was a captain in Colonel Nelson's New Jersey Regiment during the Revolutionary War.

William Williamson had several children. Among them were Isaac, the oldest, and John, my great, great grandfather, born in 1764 but the date of his death is not known. John's son, William, my great grandfather, was the father of Elbert S. Williamson, my father's father.

Isaac Williamson, the brother of my great, great grandfather was a lawyer. He became the eighth governor of New Jersey. He was a Federalist but was first nominated for public office by the Republican-Democrats. He served in the state assembly for two terms in 1815 and 1816. In 1817 he was made governor of New Jersey and was elected to eleven more one-year terms. He became keenly interested in the Delaware and Raritan Canal and worked for the canal company as their lawyer after having the governorship. He was known as "the great Conciliator." He served as president of the 1844 State Constitutional Convention.

In the same year, Elbert S. Williamson, my grandfather, bought his property and established his blacksmith shop at the corner where the Plainsboro road crossed the Trenton-New Brunswick Turnpike. The blacksmith shop faced the turnpike. Later, a wheelwright shop, facing in the same direction, was joined to the blacksmith shop by a runway leading to the second story of each. By means of this, carriages were drawn up to the platform at the top of the runway and taken into the paint shop over the wheelwright shop. When Elbert Williamson died, his son Frank took over the property and the business, which he carried on with the part time assistance of his brother, Theodore: George Williamson was the painter and Charles, the wheelwright.

After the death of Frank Williamson, the place was sold to the Rockefeller Foundation. It later became the property of Princeton University.

— Ida W. Engelke

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Ida Louise Williamson Engelke passed away May 27, 1977. This article was made available to us by her daughter, Esther W. Engelke.

## The Trolleys of West Windsor

*Elmer W. Fry, who recently moved to Pennsylvania, knows just about all there is to know about trolleys — in particular the trolley system that joined New York City and Philadelphia. The following article is excerpted from a paper written by Mr. Fry in 1976 and from his talk to the Society at our March 1986 meeting.*

Every West Windsor resident knows the Public Service Electric and Gas Company's high tension power lines that bisect the township, but few newcomers recognize that the power lines mark the right-of-way of an inter-urban trolley line which formed the middle link of the New York to Philadelphia trolley route.

At the turn of the century the era of the high speed electric railway had begun. A high speed line between Trenton and New Brunswick was planned by the Trenton and New Brunswick Railroad Company. Construction began in 1902 on a line from Greenwood Avenue in Trenton to Milltown. The road connected with the Middlesex and Somerset Traction Company west of Milltown and passed through Deans, Dayton, Plainsboro, Grovers Mill, and Mercerville, to the Interstate Fair Grounds at Trenton.

The financial backers were Philadelphia bankers A.S. and A.N. Chandler. The Chandlers also held interest in the Camden and Trenton Railway.

The Trenton and New Brunswick Railroad opened for business on November 3, 1902. Tracks ran from New Brunswick to Trenton for 27-1/2 miles, 23 miles of which was on private right-of-way. Running time was an hour and fifteen minutes.

Passengers from New Brunswick to Trenton purchased a three-coupon ticket: one coupon for the Middlesex and Somerset Traction to Milltown, a second for the Trenton and New Brunswick R.R. to the Fair Grounds, and a third coupon for the Wilbur Line of the Trenton Street Railway Company to downtown Trenton. The fare was 45¢ one way; 80¢ round trip.

The first year of business one car on a three hour headway was enough to maintain service. Traffic increased in the spring of 1903 to make hourly service necessary. A group of Trenton newspapermen made the trip from Milltown to Trenton in 44 minutes, the publicity aided in booming the line.

The rolling stock of the Trenton and New Brunswick road consisted of six Niles interurban cars. The cars were named after cities and towns along the trans-state trolley route. A small car house and a power house were located at Grovers Mill.

Trans-state trolley service was improved in 1903 when the Trenton Terminal Railroad completed 0.87 miles of





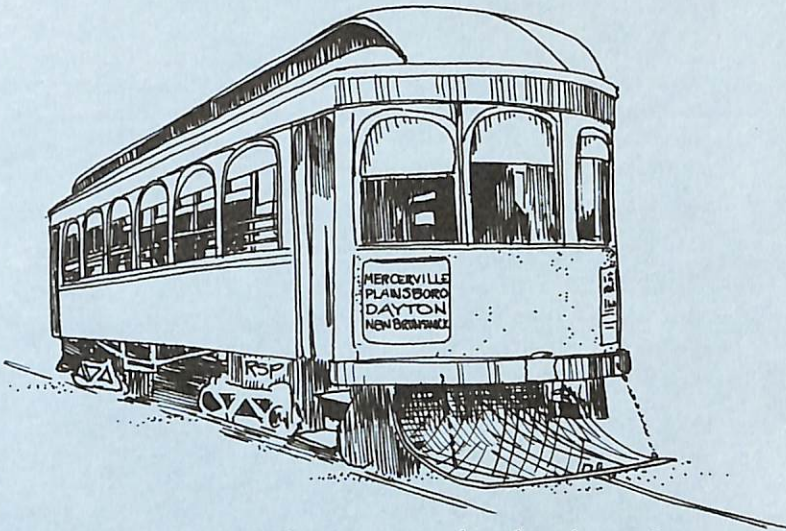
Short Line Railroad were leased to the Trenton Terminal Railroad which was controlled by Public Service. In August, 1912 construction work to complete the Short Line from Bayway to Bonhampton Junction, 12 miles, was begun. At Bonhampton Junction a connection was made with the existing track of the Middlesex Line which operated between Perth Amboy and New Brunswick.

On June 30, 1913 a two-car train with company officials and guests made a trip over the new Fast Line to New Brunswick and Trenton Junction, and on July 1, 1913 regular service began. The running time between Newark and Camden was reduced from 8 to 5 hours. Fare was \$1.45 for the 90-mile trip.

The Public Service Railroad was incorporated on October 6, 1913 as a merger of Trenton Terminal Railroad and the Elizabeth, New Brunswick and Trenton Railroad. The Fast Line was operated by the Public Service Railroad until abandonment.

The Newark-Trenton Fast Line began service July 1, 1913. Cars operated from the Lackawanna Railroad Station in Newark to Public Service Junction (formerly New York Junction) at Trenton. On August 14, 1913 the line was extended over double gauge track to State and Warren Streets, Trenton. On April 30, 1916 the Newark terminal was changed to the upper level of the new Public Service Terminal Building. After January 6, 1924 the Fast Line was operated in two sections; Newark-New Brunswick and New Brunswick-Trenton.

The New Brunswick-Trenton Line (1926) was operated with light cars, and the Plainsboro (Grover's Mill) power



station was closed. Service was reduced to three trips daily. On December 7, 1930 service to downtown Trenton ended and cars turned at Public Service Junction. Gasoline-electric cars replaced the electric cars in 1931, to be replaced in turn by rail busses. Service ended on May 27, 1937. The Fast Line Track was dismantled leaving the high towers of PSE&G to mark their route.

Besides the right-of-way, the only physical remains left of the Fast Line in West Windsor Township in 1976 are the open deck steel plate girder bridge across the Millstone River, and the reinforced concrete stationary steam engine foundations at the Power House site.

— Elmer W. Fry

## Join Us Today!

Historical Society of West Windsor  
P.O. Box 38  
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550  
Attention: Kay Reed, Treasurer

Please check the appropriate box:

- FAMILY MEMBERSHIP—\$12. per year
- SINGLE MEMBERSHIP—\$8. per year
- FULL-TIME STUDENT MEMBERSHIP—\$5. per year
- SENIOR CITIZEN MEMBERSHIP—\$5. per year
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- ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP (One Vote/One Representative)—\$25. per year

NAME (INCLUDE ALL NAMES IF FAMILY MEMBERSHIP)

MAILING ADDRESS

TELEPHONE NUMBER

Additional Donation—\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed—\$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Bylaw Changes

At our March 9, 1987 meeting, two important changes were made in the Bylaws of the Society:

■ **Quorum** — Effective immediately, quorum for a meeting shall consist of members present, so long as one of the members present is an officer.

■ **Membership Year** — Beginning January 1, 1988, the membership year of the Society shall coincide with the calendar year. Therefore, dues for the Society are payable in January of each year and shall cover from January 1 through December 31 of each year.

This means that 1985-86 members' dues will be paid up until December 31, 1987 instead of the former September 30, 1987.

As a result of the change in the Membership Year, Election of Officers will take place at the **November** meeting, with nominations given at the **September** meeting.

Both changes will make the running of the Society much simpler and more logical.

## Acquisitions

■ Two black-and-white lithographs by Dendy Sadler, dated 1893, entitled, "The Whist Game" and "When we were boys together," were donated by Joan and Tracy Eddinger.

■ Iron hinges and other iron hardware, as well as a "DeLaval Milker" enamel sign, found around the John Rogers House, before the Park was established, by Douglas G. Kiofsky of Kingston.

■ Two post cards: one showing the main street of

Dutch Neck; the other a photograph of the Town Hall in Dutch Neck. Both contributed by Martin Winar.

■ Liberty Magazine calendar for 1927 and a post card showing Lake Carnegie were donated by Ruth and Paul Finkelstein.

We thank these kind donors and look forward to displaying these acquisitions at our next Holiday House Tour.

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Letter to the Editor:

The Broadside did arrive, and what a joy it was to read the Aqueduct Story, study the map and pictures. My "little" mother (Stella Hawk Gordon) used to drive me and my sister from our farm on Quakerbridge Road to my grandparents' home on the hill overlooking the canal and Carnegie Lake on the road from the Aqueduct to Kingston. (The handsome house has been torn down by Princeton University who bought the farm and surrounding land.)

Mama drove us in the buggy with skittish Roany often "in charge." It seemed hazardous to me, driving on the road so close to the canal.

Uncle Daniel Hawk, Anabelle's (Hawk Jantz) father, had wonderful stories he loved to tell about the Aqueduct. Oh my, what reminiscing I've done since the Aqueduct Story arrived!

Sara Gordon Cox  
West Melbourne, Florida

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Broadside is a publication of the Historical Society of West Windsor.

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