

BROADSIDE

Fall & Winter 1991

FROM THE PAGES OF THE PRESS

Last year the Society received as a donation a set of indices from the Princeton Press, the newspaper that became today's Packet. These indices cover most of the years 1890 to 1900.

The following two articles are the first in what will be an irregular series derived from entries in these indices.

Post Office Robbers

Local post offices are much in the news these days, what with West Windsor wondering if it will lose its last in-Township office with a Township name. Yes, we said LAST. Losing post offices is not something new to West Windsor. The last one to be lost was located in Dutch Neck in what is now an empty building on the corner of Village and Mill Roads, next to the firehouse. It closed back in the early 1960s.



FORMER GENERAL STORE/POST OFFICE ON CORNER OF MILL AND VILLAGE ROADS IN DUTCH NECK.

The following article from the Press in February of 1900 is about that post office:

"A gang of robbers made a daring attempt to rob the post office at Dutch Neck about 3 o'clock Wednesday (Feb. 14) morning. The office is in connection with a general country store, over which is a residence."

"Postmaster Frank R. Adams was awakened by the noise made in blowing open the safe. Adams was sleeping in the room above the office, and, hearing men talking downstairs, fired four shots in the dark through a hole in the floor. The robbers immediately started on a run towards Princeton Junction."

"The farmers in the vicinity quickly organized a posse. But they could find no trace of the gang. The flight of the robbers was so hurried that they failed to take away any valuables."



Talking about the Weather

This writer read somewhere that people tend to forget what weather is like from year to year. They always think that what they're living through now is the worst it has ever been. That's probably what the people who lived through 1896 thought too.

It started on January 6, 1896. The entry for that day reads: "Thermometer 2 below Zero. No colder weather in 15 years." But it must have been cold for quite some time because the next day's entry says that ice cutting had begun. (Some readers may remember times before refrigeration made easy work of perishable food storage when ice had to be cut from frozen ponds to use in ice boxes.)

By January 10 the weather had moderated. This was interrupted by a heavy storm (snow or rain is not specified) on the 24th. The entry for the 29th says, "Delightful fine warm weather." It didn't last. (Cont. p. 2)

Talking about the Weather (continued)

On February 6 there was a heavy rainstorm that flooded cellars locally. Wind velocity was from 72 to 80 miles an hour, and the hurricane flag was raised for the first time in New York. Ten days later the temperature was 8 below Zero.

March saw "very heavy cold winds beginning the 1st and lasting four days and nights." On the 7th the second thunderstorm of the season occurred. (No note of the first.)

The last couple of years we've complained because we didn't seem to have a spring because of the "hot" weather in May. Well, 1896 went us one better: April 12 - "Summer came at a bound, spring having been skipped." May temperatures stayed up there: "Very hot yesterday and today." May 12.

There are no weather entries for June, but July and August come in with these: July 11 (a Saturday) "A rainy week thus far." July 16 "Excessive heat, or rain, seem to rule about now." July 17 "Excessively hot weather, which continues 15 days. Thermometer ranging from 80 to 100. "(Remember, there wasn't any air conditioning then and the humidity was probably the same as now. The only places to cool off were under trees or at the 'ole swimming hole'.)



On July 22 "Severe thunderstorms," followed by: July 27 "Brilliant atmospherical display during an evening storm," on August 6 "Excessive heat causes stoppage of work." Finally what must have been the beginning of the return to normal, August 9th "Severe windstorm at night lasts only a short time however."

After this there are no more summer weather entries. If no one's talking about the weather, then it must be OK, right?

But then again, the first skating of the 1900-01 winter season took place on December 5th. There were no indoor rinks back then, so it must have been pretty cold for a week or two before that.

Whenever you're complaining about the weather, remember, people have been doing just that for millennia, and our's probably isn't any worse than their's was.

-Carol Silvester



HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

The holidays are just around the corner and our 10th Annual Holiday House Tour along with them. The date is Sunday, December 8th at the "Castle" at Tamarack Farms, Bear Brook Road, in Princeton Junction.

Hours for touring are 1 to 4 p.m. Suggested donations: \$5 for adults and \$3 for members, Senior Citizens and children from 6-17. Over 80 and pre-schoolers, free.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Castle: It is the home of the Parry Family which contains many collections from colonial cooking equipment to military hats to quilts and dolls. Christmas trees will be displayed throughout the house each in a different style.

We will be calling members to be Room Guides and to provide cookies for the Tour. Hope you will be available for our biggest fund-raiser.

ZAITZ FAMILY RECEPTION

On May 5, 1991, the Society hosted a reception in honor of Max Zaitz and his family on the occasion of their donation of property on Southfield Road.



PLAQUE OF APPRECIATION PRESENTED TO MAX ZAITZ BY TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBER GENE O'BRIEN ON BEHALF OF WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP AT RECEPTION ON BEHALF OF THE MAX ZAITZ FAMILY MAY 5, 1991.

It was a most successful event. To make it run so smoothly, there was a great deal of behind-the-scenes work. To mention all who prepared the hors d'oeuvres and brownies, those who phoned all the members to provide them, those who tended to the beverages, those who recorded the event on still and video camera, would be an endless list. You know who you are. We thank you!

PROGRESS REPORT THE ZAITZ-SCHENCK HOUSE

Clean-up - A work crew of Society members has cleared the house and out-buildings of all removable contents. Mary and Warren Schenck have removed 8 (so far) groundhogs from under the house. Warren has removed the asbestos shingle from the porch wall and prime painted the area. He has also scraped the old paint from the porch posts.

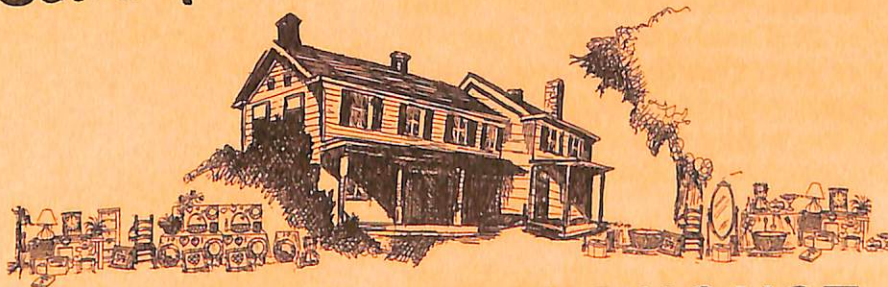
Work Crew Evenings - Thursday evenings from 6 p.m. to dark have been set aside for members and friends to work at the house. Warren is at the house most mornings if it is more convenient for you to work then. Call 799-1278 if you are free during the day, or on a Thursday evening.

Projects to be completed include: general cleaning of house; removal of kitchen cabinets and exposure of remains of beehive oven; trimming of bushes and grass around house.

We have a lot to accomplish before September 28th to make the house fit to tour. We hope you can help.

Restoration Projects - Malcolm Roszel has surveyed the needs at the house and put out bids to contractors for the first projects: Removal, then replacement of front porch; Repair or replacement of chimney serving furnace; Removal of "varmint" - termites, honey bees between 1st and 2nd floors. These projects are to be completed by our Flea Market/House Tour.

**"WORKS in PROGRESS" TOUR &
FLEA MARKET/CRAFTS SHOW**
Sat. Sept. 28th, 10-4pm - To benefit Historical Society of
West Windsor Restoration Fund



ZAITZ-SCHENCK HOUSE
50 Southfield Road - Across from golf course

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

Once again donations are coming to us from all sides. We look forward to having the house ready to display them all.

- Two books: Old Cook Books by Eric Quayle and Tales of New Jersey donated by Ruth Finkelstein.
- Wedding suit from 1943 and WAC handbag donated by Marge Gero.
- World War II ration books, a button hook, and 1876 Penny Post Card from Lorraine Kapp.
- Red prom dress and crinoline from the 1960s from Mrs. Lamont Hagerty.
- Videotape of his talk to the Retirees Club on Port Mercer by Gordon Keith.
- Minutes and files on the Veterans Monument erected after World War II in Dutch Neck donated by Edna Bush.

We thank all of you for your continued support.

ANNABELLE HAWKE JANTZ FAMILY MEMORABILIA DONATION

To list all the many items donated to the Society by Mrs. Jantz would take the rest of the newsletter. Twenty-two items of artwork and photography including three Victorian plush albums and two hand-colored photographs by Wallace Nutting. Twenty-nine books ranging from The Bobbsey Twins (original editions) to the Henry R. Hawk Family Bible dating from 1875.

Clothing donations include Maurice Hawk's Stetson hat, a black beaded caplet, camisoles and night dresses, eyeglasses in cases - 29 items. Larger items include a quilt frame (and quilt cover) and farmer's scythe. Kitchen and tool items number 54 and include an 1880s ceramic pie plate owned by Mrs. Jantz's greatgrandmother, as well as a handmade corn knife belonging to Daniel Hawk.

This is a great treasure trove for us and for all those who will see the collection through the years. On September 28th, we plan to exhibit part of the collection at the Zaitz-Schenck House. Mrs. Jantz has promised to be there at least part of the day to answer questions about the most interesting objects.

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

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