

BROADSIDE

SPRING 2001

THE JOHN ROGERS HOUSE

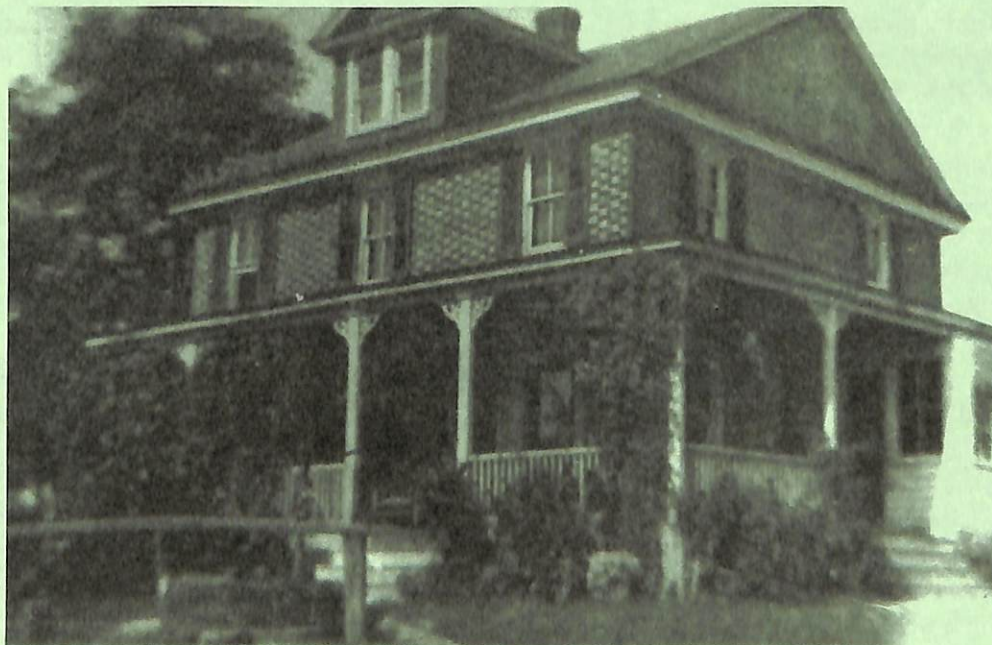
Story of an Old Mercer County Farm - A Rogers Homestead, with a sketch of a branch of the numerous family - by Joseph H. West from the Trenton Advertiser, Feb. 10, 1907

The revived interest by the Mercer County Planning Division in restoring the John Rogers House in Mercer County Park is to be commended and encouraged. The following article from the Trenton Sunday Advertiser of February 10, 1907 should provide some additional information about the Rogers Family and its farmstead building, which is one of the oldest in West Windsor and one of the only West Windsor buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.

Passengers on the New Brunswick Fast Line trolley, going eastward, just before crossing the Assanpink Creek, will notice a substantial looking brick farm house a few hundred yards to the right. The solid walls of this old colonial mansion are as firm as ever, and the woodwork of the interior is a fair specimen of the handiwork of the carpenter of Colonial times. No

doubt the shingle roof has been replaced several times, but the eave returns, which here are carried clear across the gable, have several courses of shingle that look as if they were the original ones, and are so dried and shriveled that they look like old buckwheat cakes.

The eastern gable has the date "1761" (now thought to be 1751) in gigantic figures made of black bricks. From this date till the year 1902 this house was occupied by the Rogers family, a period of 151 years, when after the death of William T. Rogers, it passed out of the family; and when last year (1906) his half-brother, Ralph Rogers, sold his farm to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the last of the old Rogers tract, purchased by John Rogers, Jr., Matthew Rogers and Robert Rogers in 1746 and 1747 passed out of the family.



The Rogers House in the early 1900s. Photo courtesy George V. Rogers.

Among the first settlers to take up land along Crosswicks Creek was one John Rogers. His land was near Whitehorse and soon afterwards was sold to Thomas Tindall. I think that the John Jr., Matthew and Robert Rogers who bought the land where the old house stands in West Windsor Township and also Isaac Rogers and Amos Rogers were of this line, but I cannot connect them. In 1746 and for 50 years after, West Windsor, East Windsor and Washington Townships were all in one and known as New Windsor or Windsor Township.

In 1745 John Rogers, Jr. and Robert Rogers, then living in New Windsor Township, bought 108 acres of William and Jonathan Hutchinson. This part had been the one-seventh part of David Lyell's land laid out for William Lyell. The Lyells were land speculators. (Origin of Penn-Lyle Road name.) In 1747 Matthew, John Jr. and Robert Rogers purchased an adjoining tract from John and William Burnett. A part of this last tract had been sold by the Lords Proprietors of East Jersey to John Barclay in 1693, who at once sold it to John Reid.

Another part had been sold by the Proprietors to John Reid in 1696. In 1690 a part Reid then owned had been sold to John Laing, who at once sold it to Augustus Gordon, who conveyed it to John Burnett, who eventually got the whole tract which the Burnett family held until they sold it to the Rogers family. The former owners were all land speculators, and no doubt the Rogers were the first to put a plow into the soil.

On September 9, 1757, the land then owned by the Rogers was divided by them into three parts. John Rogers, Jr. getting the part which remained in the family so long. In 1767 he bought 22 acres more of Robert Rogers, as the big brick house was built before these brothers divided the large tract. It may be that they built it jointly, but anyway it became the property of John Jr. in 1757, by the division, and his part was the farm where the old mansion stands on the Ralph Rogers farm and the one now owned by Edward Dilatush.

These pioneers had for near neighbors the Hutchinsons and Tindalls, but it is evident that the two parts held by Matthew and Robert Rogers soon passed out of the hands of the family, but I am inclined to believe that all of the old stock of Rogers in West Windsor and Washington Township were of this family, of which were the three brothers John Jr.,

Matthew and Robert of the Rogers tract, and their brothers Amos and Isaac of other sections. They also had a sister, Mary Rogers, and perhaps others brothers and sisters. It appears that Matthew Rogers eventually went to South Carolina.

John Rogers, Jr., became a wealthy man, but had no children that lived to grow up. In 1791, his wife, Rachel, died. He buried her on the farm at a spot in front of the old mansion, but the width of one field away and just beyond what is now the line of the Ralph Rogers farm. He erected a headstone that bears the following: "Rachel Rogers, wife of John Rogers who departed this life 1791, aged 64 years and one day." Another stone there bears only the letter "B." He also built three sides of a brick wall around the spot. Two years later, in 1793 John Rogers died and was buried by the side of his wife. His will, made in 1792 directed that all his slaves of age be set free at once, and that all the younger ones, as soon as they became 21 years old.

He willed the old farm to his nephew, Ezekiel Rogers, and his brother Isaac Rogers. He directed that Ezekiel should complete the wall around the burial lot and also ordered that he should not let any of his slaves freed by his will come to want. His lands in Nottingham Township he willed to Robert, son of his brother Robert. Gave his sister, Mary Rogers, 20 pounds, and gave different members of the Hartpence family his property on Millstone creek and his property at Hightstown.

Ezekiel Rogers completed the brick wall around the burial lot, but if he placed a headstone at the grave of his uncle, John Rogers, it is not there now. The brick wall was removed after it had stood for about 80 years and its headstones lie along the fence.

The descendents of this large family of sons and daughters are exceedingly numerous in this county and elsewhere, and many hundreds can call the old brick mansion the parent *hive*.

Frank Schielke bought the farm in 1902 and sold it during the 1930s Depression to James and Jennie Sciarotta. When James died, Jennie rented the farm on a long-term lease to William Flock. Flock grew tomatoes and potatoes, with grain as an alternate crop. He also planted an extensive peach orchard in the early 1960s. The farm was sold to Mercer County for the park in the early 1970s.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY - SPRING 2001

Schenck Farmstead

- The Farmhouse - Thanks to Clifford Reed the small kitchen (former downstairs lavatory) is now usable. Those of us from the city will recognize its size and efficiency.
- The 1790 kitchen floor has been stripped to its log joists, cement poured under the joists and recycled floor boards added. There is still some painting to be done and minor touches and we will be ready to move furniture back in.
- Draperies for the living room have been ordered. Valances for the kitchen and bedroom curtains have been hung.
- New light fixtures for the outside fence have been installed, as well as light sconces for both stairways.
- The Barn - The Township is still sending out bids and hopes to find someone to reassemble the building. Cement foundation needs to be poured first.
- The Schoolhouse-Nothing happening here. We have collected about 6 old school desks of different vintages and some school books, as well as a chalkboard on a wheeled base donated by RCA (Sarnoff). Need more desks.
- School Tours-Mary Schenck and Kay Reed have hosted several groups from the schools, as well as a Boy Scout troop #66. Additional school tours are scheduled for May 29 and June 6th.
- Lighted sign for the driveway entrance has been donated by Betty Zaitz. Mrs. Zaitz has also donated a plaque that will be mounted by the farm bell next to the farmhouse.
- The 4-H Club, under the direction of Lois Stuller, will plant a flower garden at the farm house.
- Lighted flagpole has been installed between the schoolhouse and the barn.

Events

- "Antiques Roadshow"- On Monday, April 2nd, Richard Sheaf and Tom Petrino enthralled the 25 participants by giving information and appraisals of antique items they brought in. Both men are extremely knowledgeable about all types of antiques. We hope to invite them back in a year or two.

- The Schenck House is so close to completion we are beginning to think about and plan an opening celebration. All members are invited to pass along their ideas and thoughts on the subject.
- On May 20, we hosted the Historical Associations of Central Jersey at the Schenck House. The group which we founded in 1983 consists of 19 historical societies and organizations in the area, including Princeton, Plainsboro, Trenton, Jamesburg, etc.

Gifts to the Society

- Home Depot, Inc. - paint for the 1790 Kitchen. Home Depot has promised additional donations to us.
- Mershon Concrete- cement for under the floor of the 1790 kitchen, to prevent animals coming into the house through the floor.
- Doug Kiovsy donated the script for the movie "The Usual Suspects" by West Windsor's Christopher Macquarrie. He also sent us a photo of the Schenck House, showing its farm bell in place and a tape of the Mercury Theater's "War of the Worlds."

Other Projects

- Landmarks Directory Photos - Jody Kendall has offered to photograph West Windsor's older houses. This is a monumental task and we hope that any of you interested in taking photos will offer to help. Phone Jody at 799-2377 or Joan Parry at 452-8598.

Memberships

New Members: We welcome: Frank and Linda Potter; Catherine and Paul McKenna; Kristen and Stephen McCormick and family; Beverly and James Souders and Carl Applegate.

Milestones: We regret to report the passing of Charter Member **Elsie Goodrich**, who donated so many pieces of the vintage clothing worn by our mannequins. Just as we went to press, we learned of the sudden passing of **Norman Goldstein**. Norman will be sadly missed especially during our Holiday House Tours, where he was the best Santa Claus ever.

If you have not paid your 2001 dues (look on your mailing label), please send them in now. As the Schenck House opens, we will be offering regular events and programs. Members will be given priority and a discounted entrance fee for any events for which we must charge.

Genealogical Notes on Rogers Family from article by Joseph H. West:

John Rogers, Jr. died 1793
Wife Rachel-died 1791-64 years and one day-Buried
on Rogers Farm

Ezkiel Rogers, son of Isaac, and who was willed his
uncle John Rogers' farm-born Oct 23, 1762 -
Buried in Hamilton Square Presbyterian graveyard.

His first wife and mother to 13 children:
Phebe Ridgeway - born Feb. 21, 1773.
Phebe was a Quaker and is buried at Crosswicks. She
lived to be over 100 years old.

Children of Ezkiel and Phebe Rogers:

1. Isaac - July 24, 1791, died young.
2. Rachel - Oct. 5, 1792, died young.
3. Susannah, June 17, 1794 - married Israel Lutes
4. Ezekiel, Jr. Nov. 11, 1795 - married
Mary S. Runyon, born Feb. 18, 1801
(daughter of Richard Runyon who served in
American Revolution.) Ezekiel, Jr. is buried in
the Hamilton Square Baptist graveyard.

Children of Ezekiel Jr. & Mary S. Runyon:

- a. Isaac, Nov. 14, 1818-married Elizabeth Mount
& located on a farm adjoining, bought of
Ralph Tindall
- b. Emeline - Sept. 24, 1820 - married Jacob Keeler
- c. Richard R. - Sept. 17, 1823 married
Mary A. Hutchinson. This is the venerable
Dr. R. R. Rogers of East Hanover St. Trenton.
5. Ann - August 15, 1797 - married a Ridgeway
first; secondly John H. Clarke. Clarke owned
house where General Mercer died. Children
born in room where Mercer died.
6. Jacob - May 9, 1799 - married a Wall.
7. Esther - Jan. 25, 1801 - married James C. Flock
of Quaker Bridge
8. Phebe - Nov. 19, 1802 - married first
Stephen Hooper and secondly Matthias Mount
9. John - August 18, 1804 - married first
Caroline Silvers and second Mrs. Elizabeth
Scott. John is buried in the Hamilton Square
Presbyterian graveyard.

Children of John Rogers & Caroline Silvers:

- a. Rachel - married Sering Shangle
- b. Ralph - married Sarah Hulse
- c. Runyon
- d. Ezekiel

Child of John Rogers & Mrs. Elizabeth Scott:

William T. Rogers - last to own Rogers House.
Buried in Dutch Neck cemetery

10. Amy - March 9, 1806 - married John Hammell
first and second George Cole.
11. Lucy - Dec. 26, 1807 - married Eli Dye.
12. Sarah - August 1, 1809 - married Lockart Tindall
13. Amos - March 24, 1812 - married
Parmelia Tunis and they went to the West

Second wife of Ezkiel Rogers:

Mary Tunis, who secondly married Thomas Butcher.
Their children:

1. Thomas - February 6, 1825 - married Alice A.
King and was a resident of Atlantic Highlands.
2. Mary Ann - Nov. 23, 1827 -
married George Holmes.



*William T. Rogers and his son George V. Rogers just before his curls
were cut off. Photo courtesy of Ethel G. Rogers.*



*Is it 1751 or 1761? Eave of Rogers House. Photo courtesy of
Jeff Currie, Currie Photo Designs*

*The Historical Society of
West Windsor
P.O. Box 38
Princeton Jct., N. J. 08550*

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