

# BASS RIVER GAZETTE

A newsletter from the History Committee of the Bass River Community Library

Issue No. 7: May-September, 2000

donations appreciated

## THE GREAT BUCTO - HARRISVILLE FIRE OF 1930

by Peter H. Stemmer

Fire is a way of life in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. From its first white settler, the Great John Mathis, to the present day, Bass River residents are mindful of the ever present dangers of forest fires. 1930 was an exceptionally dry year with rainfall 50% below normal. Fires burned all along the east coast from Virginia to New England. Southern New Jersey lost more than 52,000 acres. Twelve fires raged in Ocean County along a front from Forked River to Lakewood with similar conditions in neighboring Monmouth County. The *Ocean County Courier* newspaper reported on 5/9/1930 that "For a period of three days this town [Tuckerton] experienced the worst series of forest fires ever recorded here." The *Tuckerton Beacon* headlines screamed, "TUCKERTON EXPERIENCES WORST FIRE IN HISTORY OF TOWN."



Maja Cowperthwaite Mathis (1869-1952) and his wife, Marietta Loveland (1869-1967), owners of the family homestead adjacent to Job's Creek, the only house destroyed by the Bucto fire. (Photo courtesy of Marietta Guertler.)

control, jumped Job's Creek and destroyed the Ellis Mathis homestead and outbuildings. This was the only house lost during the Bucto fire.

The firefighters found no relief when the Bucto fire came under control on Monday, May 5th as they were quickly dispatched to the Harrisville



Henry Updike (1890-1978) was the District 1 Fire Warden. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware.)

area to fight a raging fire that was quickly moving southward towards Leektown and New Gretna. The headfire could not be controlled and moved quickly through Nichols Bog on the Ives Branch of the Wading River, now Timberline Lake Campground, and on to Leektown. At Leektown, Howard Bozarth's sawmill at Union Hill, Smith Cramer's farmhouse, barn and outbuildings at present day Merrygold Estates, and three houses along Leektown Road were lost to the Harrisville fire. The fire then turned eastward toward Bass River State Forest and destroyed Fir Bridge as it burned toward Tuckerton.

After fighting the Bucto and Harrisville fires for an exhausting 12 days, the fire was finally declared under control on Tuesday, May 13th. It had burned an area in excess of 17,000 acres. Miraculously, no human lives were lost.

The two Fire Districts within Bass River Township were active throughout the 12 days. District 1 was

Not to be outdone, Bass River Township was also a part of this devastating series of fires. On Friday, May 2, 1930 a rubbish fire started by Mr. Lang of Bucto Road (a local reference to West Greenbush Road) escaped into the adjoining woods and burned 30 acres toward East Greenbush Road. A fire crew was quickly put into service, and the fire was thought to be under control when it flared up again the next day, crossed East Greenbush Road and Rt. 9, and burned southward toward the bay and NE to Munion Field. A series of backfires were set along the west bank of Job's Creek and along New York Road (Rt 9) toward Tuckerton. Firefighters succeeded in saving Wadson's Service Station and the houses in neighboring Mathistown. Tragically, a backfire whipped by 50 MPH winds, got out of control,



The Mathistown homestead of Ellis (1846-1903) and Jane (Mathis) Mathis (1843-1919) was located on the north side of New York Road (Rt. 9) on the East bank of Job's Creek. Their son, Maja C. Mathis (1869-1952), who taught in the one room schoolhouse in Mathistown and later rose to become the Superintendent of Schools in Florence, N.J., was born in this house and used the house as a summer home at the time of the Bucto fire which destroyed the house. [Photo courtesy of Sara Kirby Mathis Guertler (1911-1998), daughter of Maja C. & Marietta Loveland Mathis.]



John Q. Post (1884-1995) was the District 1 Deputy Fire Warden. He lived to the ripe old age of 111. (Photo courtesy of Naomi Post Maurer.)



Russie Adams (1872-1957), the District 2 Deputy Fire Warden. (Photo courtesy of John Milton Adams.)

headed by Warden Henry Updike and Deputy John Q. Post. Helpers were Wm. Arnold, Carl Arnold, Horace Bozarth, William Shultz, William Rowlett, Charles Stackhouse, Samuel Cramer, Nelson Cramer, John Budd, Douglas Lambert, and Cliff Budd. They were assigned 1 Smith Sprayer and 3 shovels. District 2 was headed by Warden Benjamin Broome and Deputy Russell Adams. Helpers were Hez Adams, Belmont Adams, Bertsall Adams, Harry Allen, Reuben McAnney, John McAnney, Lawrence Archer, Curtis Maxwell, Clarence Mathis, Samuel B. Allen, Talbert Loveland, and Talbert McAnney. They were assigned 1 Smith Sprayer and 2 buckets. Food needed for the firefighters was purchased at Clarence Mathis' grocery store in New Gretna, prepared by chief cook Ashton Lamson at the Greenbush Ranger Station, and delivered to the

scene of action by automobile. Ironically, Ash Lamson's restaurant on the NE corner of Allentown Road (No. Maple Ave.) and Old New York Road (Rt. 9) had burned down the previous year.

The sparseness of each district's equipment list is surprising. One wonders how the men managed the fire with virtually no equipment. Bennie Allen, who was 13 years old at the time of the Bucto fire and whose father Harry Allen fought the fire, remembers his father saying that

the firefighters cut red cedar saplings and used them to beat down the flames. He added that most able bodied men in town rushed to help fight the fire. This community spirit was not limited to New Gretna. A May 8, 1930 *Tuckerton Beacon* article reported that Norman Frommer, manager of the Community movie theater in Tuckerton, "... got a carload of men who



Ben Broome (1874-1961) led District 2 in fighting the Bucto-Harrisville fire. (Photo courtesy of Marian C. Broome.)

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# ANOTHER THING I REMEMBER

by Almira Cramer Steele

## YESTERDAY ALONG THE BASS RIVER

Bass River has always been the “main stream” of activity in New Gretna for as long as I can remember. During my childhood, I spent many happy hours on Bass River. Most of the kids in town came to Coal Landing to swim. There were about twenty of us there every day. A pharmacist from Philadelphia, whom we called Doc Rice, owned the property. Even though it was his summer home, he never once told us we couldn't swim there. He was a very kind gentleman, and we all respected him.

Of course we had no lifeguard at the ole swimming hole, so we were on our own more or less. There was only one incident that I can remember when we really needed one. Most of us could swim pretty good except Etta Allen. So that day, as the tide was coming in, and the water was getting deeper, Etta decided to get out of the water and go up on the dock and lay down in the sun for a while. As she lay there, she fell asleep, and while she was sleeping, she turned over and rolled off the dock into the deep water. The next thing we knew, she was being taken up stream by the tide, barely able to hold her head above the water. We all began screaming for help when Belmont Adams, an older fellow, came running and jumped in after her. He rescued her just in time and saved her life. After that episode, Etta's father took her down to Coal Landing everyday until she learned how to swim. That was a real close call but happily everything turned out okay. Etta survived all that excitement, but to this day she still vividly remembers that very scary ordeal, and so do I.

I also remember one day “Huddle” Gerew, who was always making something, had built a little canoe just big enough for a couple of kids to sit in and brought it to Coal Landing to launch it. All of us watched, waiting to see if it would survive the launch. As he got in and paddled it past the dock and up the river to show off his masterpiece, we were in awe because we never thought it would pass the test. To our surprise he paddled that little homemade canoe up and down Bass River all that summer, and it never did sink. We all agreed Tom Sawyer had nothing on us.

The main activity along Bass River at that time wasn't about all the fun we had as kids. It was more about the many men who traveled down that river every day to Great Bay in order to make a living for their families. They were hard working men whose livelihood depended on the catch of the day. About half of the men in New Gretna were baymen at that time.



Roy Hilaman's bait & tackle shop south of the Bass River bridge in the aftermath of the 1950 hurricane. The bridge abutment can be seen in the foreground. The boats strewn about are testament to the wrath of the powerful hurricane. The bridge was closed with traffic routed over the Wading River bridge. (Photo courtesy of Margaret Cramer McAnney.)

During the winter, when the river was frozen over and the men couldn't go to work in the bay, several of them would congregate down at Allen's Dock. Everyone had a story to tell or a joke to play on somebody as they all sat around the pot bellied stove. To name a few: Joe Pottie, Delbert Robbins, Cliff Budd, Talbert McAnney, Harold Gerew, Pratt Cramer, Sam Briggs, and Ira Horner.

Rube McAnney, the owner of Allen's Dock, liked to go fox hunting. He had several hunting dogs and prided himself in their ability to hunt out a fox. Talbert McAnney, Rube's cousin, who had heard these fox hunting stories so many times, decided to play a joke on Rube. Talbert had a stuffed fox in his attic, so when everyone had left the dock, Talbert took the stuffed fox and placed it out on the meadows among some tall reeds just barely visible to the naked eye. The next morning when everyone had gathered around, Talbert told Rube he thought he saw a fox out on the meadows as he drove in. Rube got all excited, and everyone jumped up and went outside to see if they could see that fox. Rube took his shot gun while Talbert showed him where he thought the fox might be. Sure enough, Rube got a glimpse of the fox standing very still in the reeds. Quietly he sneaked up on the fox and when he was close enough, he shot it. Well, cotton and sawdust flew everywhere and shouts of laughter could be heard all the way up the river. Rube knew then he had

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The gang continued to swim at Coal Landing on the Bass River even after we were kids. (l-r) Leila Mathis, Mildred Mathis, Minerva Cramer & Almira Cramer (Photo courtesy of Gladys Rutter Loveland.)

There were small businesses all along the river. Mr. & Mrs. Hilaman had a home and business next to the Bass River bridge, and Allen's Dock was in operation just beyond. In between were two little clam shacks where shellfish were bought and sold. Dow Robbins and Talbert McAnney owned and operated the one closest to the bridge. I believe Frank and Johnny Gray, and later Booter Mathis, owned the other one. Further down stream Roy Mathis had a clam shack that could be reached by car at the end of South Maple Avenue, called Eel Street by the locals, the access of which was cut off in 1958 when the Garden State Parkway was built.

Down by the bend of the river, Arnold Cramer and sons, Harold and Pratt, operated a thriving shell fish business for many years. They had a large oyster house where seafood was brought in and made ready for market everyday. Their business could be reached by car at the end of Amasa Landing Road. The old building, somewhat modernized, now stands vacant.

Allen's Dock was a hub of activity at that time. The baymen stopped there for almost everything. Repairs, gas, refreshments, or just to enjoy the good cold water from the never ending flow of the artesian well. Even though these men worked hard, they also took time out on occasion to have a little fun.

During the winter, when the river was frozen



Rube McAnney pumping gas at his marina, Allen's Dock, on the Bass River. (Photo courtesy of Margaret Cramer McAnney.)

# Jack and Jill by the River in Old Bridgeport

written by Alice Rose Adams Weber  
Jan. 16 , 1958

The following story was written by my Aunt Alice Adams Weber (1897-1973). I found it after she died. The "Jack and Jill" in the title refers to her and her brother, Burrell Morton Adams (1895-1970). They were given these nicknames as they were always seen together, just like Jack and Jill in the nursery rhyme. Burrell was also called "Pat" after a turn of the century comic strip character, Patty Jenks, who his mother thought he resembled.

Steve Eichinger



"Jack" (Burrell M. Adams) & sister "Jill" (Alice Rose Adams) played on the banks of the Wading River in Bridgeport. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

When Pat [Burrell Morton Adams] and I were quite young, to us the world was big and we thought we were much older. The first Christmas I remember, Uncle Dick and Aunt Mell came home for Christmas. They lived in Atlantic City and they trimmed Christmas trees for all the nieces and nephews in the family. Uncle Dick made a beautiful garden under the tree and made a pond with swans and little men and little lead boats. Of course my brother and I had to take the little lead men and boats out in the middle of the room, on the floor and play. Uncle Dick, a big, tall man, not watching his step, our little men and boats were flat and that was the sad end of them.

Our sister, Nora, the oldest, had died with Diphtheria. I could just remember her. We had a play house around the old picket fence. I was 3 and 1/2 years old when she died. We all had Diphtheria, but mother. Daddy nearly died with it. Pat ran around with it, and I was in bed. Dr. Duncan was our doctor. I still remember the pretty little pink pills in little bottles in his satchel, how I wanted them. I thought they were so pretty.

Then the next summer, mother went to a picnic at Fred Miners. Late in the afternoon, Daddy took us to get mother. This was the first time we had ever seen a wind mill. It must have been at Lower Bank. Capt. Jesse Cavileer had one and Mom Weaver had one at Weekstown. We had Fred Horse. He was so pretty and very fast. Daddy had a rubber tired wagon, no top.

Then, another trip was Memorial Day, over to the old church by the cemetery. They had lunch under the big oak by the church. It had seats made out of planks. The Reverend N. VanSant spoke. I remember the lunch was boiled ham, potato salad and a banana on wooden plates. I remember Aunt Emma and Uncle Charlie Robbins were there. I wore a little white lacy hat, all trimmed across the crown with old rose baby ribbon. I loved that little hat. I thought I was so big. Pat and I played around the river. Jim Kelly fished Pat out of the deep water once. I don't remember that.

The summer of 1901, Daddy was on the fish steamer. Pat and I would go with him on Sunday afternoon and take him to Bass River at the dock to the steamer. There we had old Topsy. Fred horse was dead. Topsy was the mule and daddy turned her around, then she brought us home. Pat did the driving.

We had a bad storm in Fall of 1901, in September. The dam at Harrisville broke. The tide was over the bridge. They rode to Ed Sooy's store, also the post office to get the mail.

Then we had our cow, Naby. Daddy pastured her with the Updikes. They charged a \$ a head for the Summer. Nearly everybody in the



The first Wading River bridge was a turn bridge that rotated to open. The Stoy can be seen beached to the right of the bridge. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

place put theirs out there. During the storm Naby drowned. She was soon to have her calf. Sam Maxwell had two yearlings that drown. Uncle Billy Maxwell was way up in his eighties. He walked down to the meadows to see what had happened to Naby. She was near a ditch and caught her nose in the barbed wire fence. The tide come up over her. The yearlings died the same way, so Jack and Jill had to do with less milk.

The two master ships used to sail in and bring loads of shells to make lime for the fields. They used some shells on the roads. Some of the ships carted pine cordwood. There used to be so many rows of cordwood along the river that we played on it. They took a lot from the Goldecker landing. One ship had a negro crew. Nights they used sing after their work was done, it sounded so nice. When they dumped the shells, we used to get pretty shells and found so many little sea horses.

As we grew older, they had the one masted boats. The baymen sailed to the bay. There used be from 8 to 12 boats below the bridge anchored on weekends. They stocked up Mondays and sailed to the bay and returned on Friday. In their time, they used bring in mussels in the spring of the year. Farmers broadcast them on the corn fields and potato patches. Judge French used to have his boat brought in at Leeds Point. He put the mussels around his fruit trees in his orchard.

Around 1901, we saw our first automobile. It was like a Fall Top and had rubber tires on wagon wheels. They had to push it up the hill from the bridge up to the house. It belonged to George Gossler who had the Wading River Cranberry Bogs. The road there was a two rut road. In the spring of 1902, they widened and graveled the road from Bass River to Atsion Creek.

March 30th my mother had twin boys, one born dead. My nose was cut off. I no longer was the baby. There were no girls around on this side of the river, so I was a Tom Boy.

It was late in the Fall of 1901 when Fred horse got hurt. Daddy was working on the bogs with Fred and Topsy. She jumped and upset the wagon off of the dam and it threw Fred on his back and broke it so badly, that they had to put him out of his misery. Fred was buried by the ridge road near the sand hole. Eva Leek, was older than I. We picked flowers a lot



Burrell Morton Adams, "Jack," who later became the father of Burrell Henry Adams presently living in Tuckerton, on Topsy, the family mule. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

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Young Steve at the Wading River bridge with a snapper in one hand and a pickering in the other. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

## ALICE WEBER'S WHITE HOUSE SNAPPER SOUP

One of our Gazette reporters, Steve Eichinger, brings us the snapper soup recipe featured in this issue. He brought two very old recipe books to show me that belonged to and were used by his Aunt, Alice Rose Adams Weber. *The White House Cook Book*, first printed in 1887, was co-authored by Mrs. F. L. Gillette, who had made a lifelong and thorough study of cookery and housekeeping, and Hugo Ziemann, who at the time of the book's publishing was a Steward in the White House. The edition owned by Alice Weber was revised by Mary E. Dague in 1928. The book contains not only tried and tested recipes, but also menus, table etiquette, care of the sick and many facts worth knowing, including pictures of rooms in the White House and some pictures of the First Ladies. The second cookbook Steve loaned me is the *Gold Medal Flour Cook Book*, copyrighted in 1910 by the Washburn-Crosby Co. Perhaps a recipe from this book will be featured in a future edition of "Yesterday's Recipes." Both cookbooks contain a large variety of recipes in all food groups.

While Steve was growing up, he spent a lot of time with his Aunt Alice. Alice was an interesting woman who had many interests and abilities. Steve spent many hours with her as she 'tended' her turtle traps along the banks of the Wading River. SNAPPER SOUP is said to be a most delicious dish. The biggest problem that I've heard about is getting the snapper turtle ready for the pot. I have heard so many stories about how big they get and how they snap and hiss at you. I've heard the best way to kill them is to chop off their head and hang them upside down on a line to drain out the blood. If the turtle is very large its shell would need to be split apart with a hatchet, then either cut the meat from the shell or put the turtle into a large pot of water to boil until the meat can be taken from the shell. I don't know how easy it is to 'catch' a snapper these days, but the following is a tried and true recipe in case you are so inclined to try it.

### SNAPPER SOUP (Serves: 6-8)

#### TURTLE STOCK:

Boil Snapping Turtle with 3 ounces Seafood base or 1-tablespoon salt till tender. Remove Turtle from stock, strain and reserve. When cooled, remove meat from bone, discard bones.

1 and 1/2 pounds turtle meat	1 and 1/2 cup chopped onions	2 tablespoons minced garlic	1/2 cup dry sherry
2 and 3/4 teaspoons salt, in all	2 tablespoons minced shallots	1 cup chopped tomatoes	1/4 cup chopped parsley
3/4 teaspoon cayenne, in all	1/4 cup chopped bell peppers	1/2 cup Worcestershire sauce	1/2 cup chopped green onions
6 cups water	1/4 cup chopped celery	3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice	4 hard boiled eggs, finely chopped
1 stick butter	3 bay leaves		2 tablespoons chopped green onions
1/2 cup flour	1/2 teaspoon dried leaf thyme		2 tablespoons chopped hard-boiled eggs

Put the turtle meat in a large saucepan with 1 teaspoon of salt, 1/4 teaspoon cayenne and the water. Bring to a boil. Skim off any foam that rises to the top. Reduce heat to medium and simmer for 20 minutes. With a slotted spoon transfer the meat to a platter.

Cut the meat into 1/2-inch dice and reserve the liquid. In another large sauce pan, combine the butter and flour over medium heat, stirring constantly for 6 to 8 minutes to make a dark roux. Add the onions, shallots, bell peppers and celery. Stir occasionally and cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the vegetables are slightly tender. Add the bay leaves, thyme and garlic, cook for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and the turtle meat. Cook for 5 to 6 minutes stirring occasionally. Add the Worcestershire sauce, the remaining salt and cayenne, the turtle stock (about 6 cups) lemon juice, and sherry. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the parsley, green onions, and eggs and simmer for 45 minutes. Garnish with green onions and chopped eggs.



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Alice Adams Weber (1) as a young woman; (2) at the Wading River bridge; (3) deer hunting at Judge French's plantation in Port Republic, and (4) exploring the Pine Barrens at Calico outside old Martha with Maud Adams. (Photos courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

#### HOUSEHOLD HINTS

[From 1003 Household Hints and Time Savers-1941 ]

- To prevent eggs from cracking when they are boiled, run hot water over them before putting them in the boiling water.
- Don't wash a flour sieve in soapy water. Use bicarbonate of soda in the water. It will not stick to the fine meshes the way soap does.

#### CORRECTION

**Issue No. 6, January-April, 2000:** Cassie Wiseman Heinrich's Pepper Relish recipe should read "12 Green Bell Peppers, **6 Red Bell Peppers** & 12 onions." The number of red bell peppers was omitted.

If you would like your family featured in a future "Yesterday's Recipes" column, please send a few recipes to Elaine Mathis  
c/o Bass River Community Library, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224.

# CATCHING SNAPPERS ON THE WADING RIVER

by Steve Eichinger



Alice Adams Weber (1897-1973) with one of her many journals that she kept on her travels in the pine barrens. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

Alice Weber was my aunt. She was my mother's sister and owned the house where I was born and now live. She also owned the house across the road next to the Wading River bridge which was the McKean Hotel in the 1800s. This is where I grew up – along the Wading River in Bridgeport.

I was about 4 years old and can remember Aunt Alice telling me different names of creeks and where the piles of ballast stones from old sailing ships were located. She would point out wild Oak Island, Cove Creek, Straight Ditch, Teal Creek, Stump Ditch and Frank's Creek where my great grandfather Frank Downs farm was located.

I can remember a lot of interesting conversations I had with my Aunt Alice about Wading River, Bridgeport, Harrisville, and old Martha Furnace, but what stands out the most are the trips we made up and down the Wading River in her row boat. Aunt Alice would row, and her dog Zip, a fox terrier, would sit up in the bow. I would sit in the stern. Aunt Alice would tie me to the seat with a clothes line, so I couldn't fall overboard.

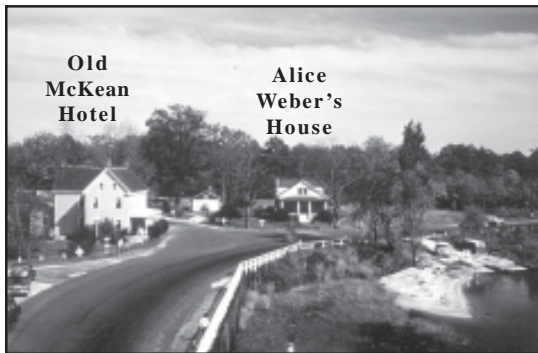


Four year old Steve Eichinger loved to go pirsch fishing with his Aunt Alice along the Wading River. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

She would take the tide down and set snapper "chokes" to catch the snapper turtles that were prized for soup. [See oppose page for recipe.] She used a 6 to 7 foot cedar stake about one inch in diameter with one end sharpened to a point and stuck in the river bottom and the other end left with it's bushy top waving in the breeze. She would tie a 4 to 5 foot piece of twine onto the stake with a two inch straight piece of iron wire, called a choker, with an eye looped in the middle [ ] tied at the other end . A nice piece of salted eel, sliced to the bone, was fastened tightly to it.

We would find small creeks or drains coming from the meadows to the river and set the poles at these points on the outgoing tide. After we set about a dozen snapper chokes, we would fish. The snappers would feed on low water. They would smell the oil slick from the eel and feed on the bait. When the bait and choker were swallowed we had him!

A modification of the wire choker was the wooden choker where a wooden peg about 1 3/4 inches long was sharpened on each end. Some people used large fish hooks to catch snappers, but this method was illegal. Fyke nets became the next popular method of catching snappers. They were made by laying a heavy fishnet type material over a series of 3 or 4 wooden hoops made from cedar sapplings placed about 2 feet apart. The fykes were about 6 feet long and 3 feet in diameter. Net funnels would be fashioned on each end. The snapper would venture in but couldn't get out. Today wire traps are used and a license is required. Regulations prevent catching snappers when the female comes ashore to lay her eggs.



View from the top of the Wading River bridge, looking south-west to the intersection of Leektown & Hammonton Roads, circa 1958. The small beach on the right, owned by Alice Weber, was used to launch Alice's rowboat on many an exciting journey with her young nephew, Steve Eichinger. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

We would fish on the low water until the tide turned and rose half up. Then we would start up the river and take up the snapper sets. Sometimes we would get 7 or 8 snappers weighing from 2 to 12 pounds. The stern (back) seat was built like a box with a hinged lid that would flip up so the snappers could be put inside. I would sit on the lid to keep the valuable catch from escaping. I can remember those pesky snappers lifting me and the seat up a few inches trying to escape. Aunt Alice would sell the snappers "on the hoof," hanging a sign up in front of the old McKean Hotel which read *Snappers- 20 cents a pound*. People would make soup, fried snapper, or snapper pot pie which was made like chicken and dumplings.



Alice Adams Weber at her favorite pastime, fishing on the Wading River. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

Yes, I have many good memories on the Wading River with Aunt Alice. I learned a lot from her about fishing, catching snappers and eels, trapping muskrats, and gathering wild cranberries and blueberries. She did it all! She was a very special person. I dearly miss her.

## BUCTO-HARRISVILLE FIRE

(Continued from page 1)

were in the theatre and rushed them to the fire lines." It's unlikely that would happen today.

Even with our modern communications and fire fighting equipment, fighting forest fires in the Pine Barrens is dangerous business. Many sadly remember the fire of 1977 when 4 Eagleswood Township firemen lost their lives in the pine woods of Bass River. Let us hope that fire fighters in the future will be

as fortunate as the brave men who fought the great Bucto-Harrisville fire of 1930.

[Note: Information regarding the Bucto fire was largely taken from "A Report of the Bucto-Harrisville Fires: May 2-13, 1930," unpublished, by James MacDonald, State Section Fire Warden. The "Bucto" spelling was used in the report. Bennie Allen and Howard Ware maintain that oldtimers from the area refer to "Buck-Toe," a male deer's toe, or the shortened "Buckto."]

The Bass River Community Library History Committee members are Harry DeVerter, Steve Eichinger, Jean & Murray Harris, Elaine Mathis, Almira Steele, and Pete Stemmer. If you have any information such as photos, letters, documents, maps, local recipes, newspaper clippings, etc. related to Bass River Township that may be helpful to us, please contact us individually; write us c/o **The Bass River Community Library, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224**; or call Pete Stemmer at 296-6748. Readers are encouraged to submit an article for publication.

## ALONG THE BASS RIVER

(Continued from page 2)



(1) Stan Bozarth, (2) Pratt Cramer, (3) Jim Cramer & (4) Harold Cramer culling oysters in the Cramer Oyster House at the end of Amasas Landing Road, circa 1950. (Photo courtesy of Arnold Cramer.)

been duped.

As Talbert told it, the air was blue as Rube had a few choice words for all of them as he walked back into the building with gun in hand. Knowing that bunch of men, I'm sure they never let Rube live that one down.

Of all the small businesses that were along the Bass River at that time, Allen's Dock is the only one still in operation today. It is now

owned and operated by George and Linda McGeoch, and I believe the famous artesian well is still flowing. The Hilaman home and business adjacent to the bridge and Roy Mathis' clam shack further down river have been torn down. Cramer's Oyster House and Walt Mathis' clam shack are still standing but not in business any more. Fred Brooks renovated Dow Robbins' old clam shack, a stones throw from the Bass River bridge, where he now sells crabs.



Cramer's Oyster House at the end of Amasas Landing Road in 1981. Steve Potter's garvey is in the foreground with the *Drednaught* docked in the rear. (Photo courtesy of Arnold Cramer.)

Most of the men who traveled down the Bass River to make a living out of Great Bay have now gone to the Great Beyond. The younger generation has moved in a different direction, but the beautiful blue Bass River still flows right through the center of our town for all of us to use and enjoy, just as it always has.

Since the "old days" a couple of productive businesses have been established along the river- the Bass River Marina and Viking Yacht Company. Since these changes have taken place, it looks as though Bass River will continue to be the "main stream" of activity in New Gretna for many more years to come.

## Gazette Subscriptions

A yearly subscription (3 issues) of the Gazette is available for anyone who sends 3 business size, 4" x 9 1/2", stamped, self addressed envelopes to Gazette Subscriptions c/o Bass River Township Community Library, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, NJ 08224. There is no charge for the subscription; however, donations are appreciated. The subscription will start with the next issue unless otherwise specified and will expire after the 3 envelopes are used. It may then be renewed by sending 3 additional envelopes.

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## NEWS FROM THE PAST

by Harry DeVerter

The following are actual news stories transcribed from the Bass River section of issues of old newspapers.

### MT. HOLLY HERALD

January 4, 1879

Last Saturday Godfrey Gerue, who rents the mill and pond at New Gretna, got his dander up because certain parties whom he did not like were gathering ice. He ordered them off, and as they did not go fast enough to suit him he began breaking up the ice which they had landed with an ax. There was a rumpus at once, in which Freeholder Charles A. Cramer, his three boys, and two other parties took part. The weapons used were an ax and an icehook. On complaint of Gerue the ice gathers were taken before Justice Maja B. Mathis by Constable Joseph B. Cramer, and were held to bail to answer at Court.

### MT. HOLLY HERALD

December 15, 1883

We have churches, stores, schools and many other things that add to the convenience and appearance of the place, but we have no railroad. The proposed new road from Absecon to Tuckerton goes about two miles south of our town, across miles upon miles of salt marsh and the Mullica river at a point where it will prove no small job to arrange a draw bridge and will be of no use to our people. I think the company would do a good thing to cross the river at Chestnut Neck.

### MT. HOLLY HERALD

June 6, 1885

The greatest curiosity in Bass River township is in the possession of constable Joseph B. Cramer, of New Gretna, and consists of a four-legged chicken. The fowl walks on its front legs, and becoming tired sits down on its back legs. . . The chicken seems to enjoy the novelty of being a quadruped and struts around with its extra pair of legs sticking out behind with all the dignity of a Chinese mandarin. Mr. Cramer is going to send it to the Zoological Garden.

### MT. HOLLY HERALD

December 11, 1886

The Harrisville school house caught fire from a defective flue, and was burned to the ground on Friday last. Fortunately there was help near, who saved the seats and organ. The building was used for a church also.

### MT. HOLLY HERALD

August 4, 1906

As his children sat busy playing in the yard at their home in New Gretna Sunday, Joseph Hickman was horrified to see a big rattle-snake working its way towards them. He uttered no warning, but quietly got a club and killed the snake before the little ones were aware of their peril. The rattler was four feet long.

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# GENEALOGY FROM STAINED GLASS WINDOWS - Part 2

by Jean and Murray Harris

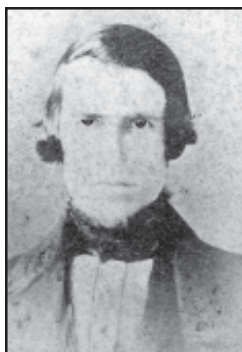
[This is the second part of an article on the memorial stained glass windows installed in the New Gretna Presbyterian Church in 1928. Part I appeared in the Jan-April, 2000 edition of the Bass River Gazette.]

The handsome stained glass windows of the First Presbyterian Church of New Gretna were paid for, back in 1928, by subscription of the then Church members. The subscribers were permitted to honor their family and friends by having their names inscribed in a small glass panel near the base of the window. These inscriptions remind us of those who passed before and whose actions define a history of the town. The last issue of the Gazette ended with a discussion of window number eight, which lists six former elders of the church.

The **ninth window** has inscribed on it the names of Elder John Franklin Cramer and his wife Mary Ann (French) Cramer. John was a merchant in a well-to-do family, and he and Mary Ann had eight children, two of whom, Mary Ella and Anna, had their names inscribed on window No. 1. The other six children include: Albert F., a Captain on a barge, who married first Mary Elrena Mathis and second Elizabeth J. Endicott; Ellen/Nellie who married Chalkley C. Sears, Jr., a cook on a tug boat; Charles Harold/Harry, Captain of a merchant vessel, who married Annie Sarah Cramer (see also window 15); Eugene Russell who married Helen Darwood; Frances; and John Franklin Jr., who was Captain of the New Jersey Fish and Game boat. A sea-going family altogether.



This 1927 postcard of the First Presbyterian Church of New Gretna and the Manse predated the stained glass windows which were installed in 1928. (Photo courtesy of Betty & Floyd West.)



Arthur Cramer (1839-1893), window #11, had a farm in the area of the present day municipal building. (Photo courtesy of Sara Mathis Guertler.)

Elder Hiram Elbridge French's name is inscribed on **window number 10**. He was born in 1838, the son of William and Phoebe (Mathis) French. Hiram married Mary E. Sears, the daughter of Jesse R. and Lydia (Mathis) Sears. Three of their children died young and are buried in Miller Cemetery.

**Window 11** contains the names of Elder Arthur Hiram Cramer and his wife Mary Jane (Mathis) Cramer. Arthur was the son of Joseph Baker and Sarah (Thompson) Cramer, and Mary Jane was the daughter of Thomas and Mary (Cale) Mathis. Arthur and Mary Jane had five children: Ambrose, who died when only a few months of age; Arthur Hiram Jr., who married first Mary Catharine Conover and second Rachel (Conover) Cranmer; Sarah Sooy Cramer who married Augustus R. Miller; Helena L. Cramer who married Captain Edward Kirk Loveland, the son of Marshall A. and Marietta (Crowley) Loveland; and Joseph Baker Cramer who married Hannah Rejessa Webster. Rejessa Hannah Cramer, the daughter of Joseph Baker and Hannah, married Frank Cramer who built and operated the Rustic Inn on the main corner in New Gretna.



Mary Jane Mathis Cramer (1841-1935), wife of Arthur Cramer was the great-great granddaughter of Great John Mathis, the first white settler in Bass River. (Photo courtesy of Sara Mathis Guertler.)

The **twelfth window** names Levi and Julia (Adams) French. His parents were listed in the discussion of window six, and Julia is the daughter of Joseph and Ann (Brush) Adams. Levi's name is also on the bell in the church steeple. They had eight

children: Daniel Webster; Levi C.; Julia Florence; George W. A.; Clara R.; Lela M.; Richard M.; and Charles Stanley French.

**Window thirteen** is inscribed Mary A. (Mathis) Garrabrant, the wife of Dr. Clarence Garrabrant and the daughter of Zebulon M. P. and Achsah (Cale) Mathis.

The name on **window number 14** is Sarah E. (Jones) French, the daughter of Lloyd and Elizabeth (Ivins) Jones, innkeepers on Long Beach Island, and the wife of Livingston B. French. Their children were Minnasota, Walter L., Laura P., Mary A., and Irena French.

**Window fifteen** is inscribed Mrs. Charles H. Cramer. She was the daughter of Marmaduke and Mary Lavinia (Cramer) Cramer, and the Annie Sarah Cramer mentioned with her husband in the description of window number nine. Charles and Annie Sarah had five children: Dora Lizzie, Walter F., Alice Emma, Harold K., and Mary Ella. Alice Emma married first \_\_\_\_\_ Knight and second William Kumpf. Alice Emma and William operated the Carlton House in Tuckerton. Mary Ella married Walter Wright.



Marshall A. Loveland (1840-1919) was memorialized in window #16. (Photo courtesy of Marietta Guertler.)

At the base of **window 16** is inscribed Marshall A. Loveland and Family. Marshall was a sea captain and lived in the house on the corner of Route 9 and Amasa's Landing Road. He was the son of John and Rachel (French) Loveland and was born in 1840. He married Marietta Crowley, daughter of Samuel Crowley. Their children were: Edward Kirk, who married Helena Cramer; Marietta, who married Maja C. Mathis, the grandson of Maja Berry Mathis whose name is on window number two; Carrie, who married Phineas K. Hilliard; Rachel J.; and Henry P. Loveland.

**Window number 17** is in memory of Mrs. Howard Mathis, whose maiden name was Harriet Stinger, the daughter of John and Sophie Stinger. She married Howard, the



Marietta Crowley Loveland, wife of Marshall Loveland (1848-1882). (Photo courtesy of Marietta Guertler.)

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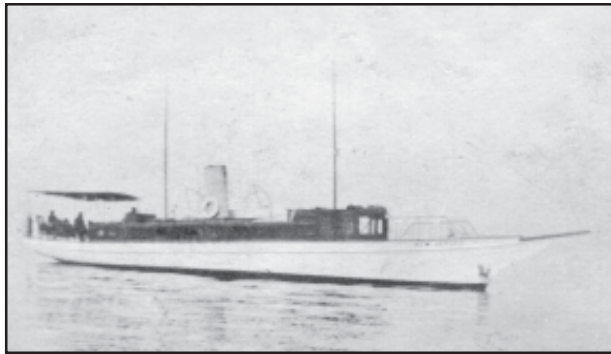
# JACK & JILL

(Continued from page 3)

of time and put them on Fred's grave. I used to play at Eva's. You had to pass her home to go to the bogs and the old ridge road.

In the Spring of 1902, they built the Clubhouse. It was sometimes called John Zurns' Clubhouse. They were members of well-to-do families of Philadelphia. The first Clubhouse was on the old main road to Harrisville, just across the road from the site of the old Joseph Gail place. At that time, some of the foundation was there and a large buttonwood tree. Waricks lived for awhile as caretakers for the first Clubhouse. Then Ed Wolf was caretaker and it burned down. Ed and his wife Bertha came and stayed with my parents until they built the Clubhouse that's still standing today, 1902 - 1968. It's built out along the river of the old Wading River Game Assn. They had a wide walkway built through the Half-Moon Swamp to the river. The river is very wide and at one time was called Christians Bay. Half-Moon today [is called] Broad Place. In the 20's it was noted for the best duck shooting blind on the Wading River and still is. It has such good feed. John Zurn had wild rice planted in the teens. It's quite heavy every year and spread all along the river for some distance.

Daddy took me up in the new clubhouse when they were building it. I was so afraid I would fall. There was just the stairway and studding. Pat and I had our pictures taken in the field of the Old Wading River Assn. One of the members, Henry Homes, took them. My sister has a picture of that clubhouse of my Daddy, Fred and Topsy and some members in the open wagon, going on a hunting party to old Harrisville. Then in 1913, my Daddy was janitor for the new clubhouse for 3 years.



The State boat, *New Jersey*, was previously owned by Daniel Sooy. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

My mother used to have quilting parties and Lizzie, Dora, Edna, Georgie, and Rebecca used [to] sew. Lizzie and Dora almost lived at our house. They liked my cousin, Joe, who lived with us. My youngest brother, the girls used to tickle him, so he stammered. He was about 3 years old. They would take him home from Sunday School with them. He was quite a swimmer and diver at the age of five. Jill was seven years old when she learned to swim. We didn't have any water wings. Uncle Billy Maxwell told us to get a piece of plank to float us, then use our feet and arms. That's how Jack and Jill learned to swim.

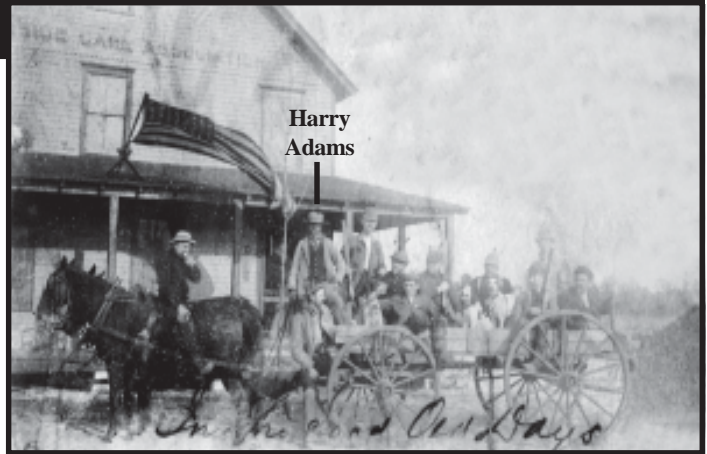
## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

(Continued from page 7)

son of Zebulon M. P. and Achsah (Cale) Mathis. Their five children include Howard Zebulon Mathis who married Bess Cramer. Bess was the organist of this church and the mother of Jack Mathis and Mildred (Mathis) Kauflin. Another child of Howard and Harriet was Clarence Gerew Mathis, who succeeded his father Howard as the proprietor of New Gretna's grocery store.

The **eighteenth and final stained glass window** memorializes William C. and Josephine Irons who are both buried in Miller Cemetery. William sold 180 acres to the State of New Jersey in 1907 that was later to become a part of Bass River State forest. Their son was Joseph Wallace Irons, born 1880.

Today we have the generosity of those long-gone donors to thank for the gift of the windows which beautify the sanctuary. In 1998 the present congregation rose to the challenge once again and raised the money to have these irreplaceable old windows completely cleaned, repaired, and protected by a glass covering, in the hope that they may continue to enhance the worship experience for many more generations to come.



Harry Adams, "Jill's" dad, with a hunting party at the old Wading River Game Association, the former Half Moon Tavern. Fred and Topsy are pulling the wagon. The property is now part of Chips Folly Campground. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

Our Sunday School teacher, Estella Peterson, named us Jack and Jill. When we were little we were always together. We all walked to Sunday School, young and old and to evening service. There was quite a crowd and they used to kick up the dust. There were lots of mosquitoes. There was Stella and Lizzie, Frank and his wife Lizzie and Billy G. Cramer, their father. There was Edna and Dora Cramer and Georgia Ann and Rebecca Williams and Cora Cramer and her Uncle Kirk. They all walked in those days. When I was about 6 or 7 they had a beach party. All the Sunday School children and some grownups. They went on the boat, *New Jersey*. I don't know if it was a state boat at that time. Dan Sooy owned it. I think Jack and Jill were the only children that didn't go. Mother wouldn't let us go, she said it would blow up. But they went to Bonds Beach. Bonds old hotel was standing then with all the furniture was in it. The only way you could get there, I guess, at that time was by boat. Jack and Jill wanted to go so bad. It hurt worse when all the other children went. It wasn't long after that, that Bonds hotel was gutted. I don't know what happened to the old hotel.

The Maxwells brought the old F. P. Stoy naptha launch with an engine and a canape. They took the engine out, tore the canape off and built a pilot house and large room and then an engine room on it. They were going to run produce. They never put an engine in it and it layed on our shore for years. It became the swimming hole and bath house for different



Alice Adams, "Jill," who played on the *Stoy* as a little girl, revisits the old boat as a young woman.. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

generations of children. All the children of Wading River remember the old Stoy. When they could swim good there, they would go to the bridge and swim in deep water. They brought F. P. Stoy from Atlantic City. It was named for the Mayor of Atlantic City at that time.