

BASS RIVER GAZETTE

A newsletter from the Bass River Community Library History Committee and the Great John Mathis Foundation

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BASS RIVER'S ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES

Part 2 - The Little Egg Harbor Years

by Peter H. Stemmer

Bass River's two earliest one room schoolhouses at Bass River Neck (1802) and old Martha Furnace (1810) were clearly documented in the Little Egg Harbor Quaker Minutes and the Martha Furnace Diary [See Gazette Issue #12]. The next wave of schools, through 1864 when Bass River Township was created from Little Egg Harbor Township, are another matter. Today's schools are so organized, regulated, and supervised by various government agencies from the local Board of Education to the State Legislature and Department of Education that we tend to believe that such was always the case. Nothing could be further from the truth!

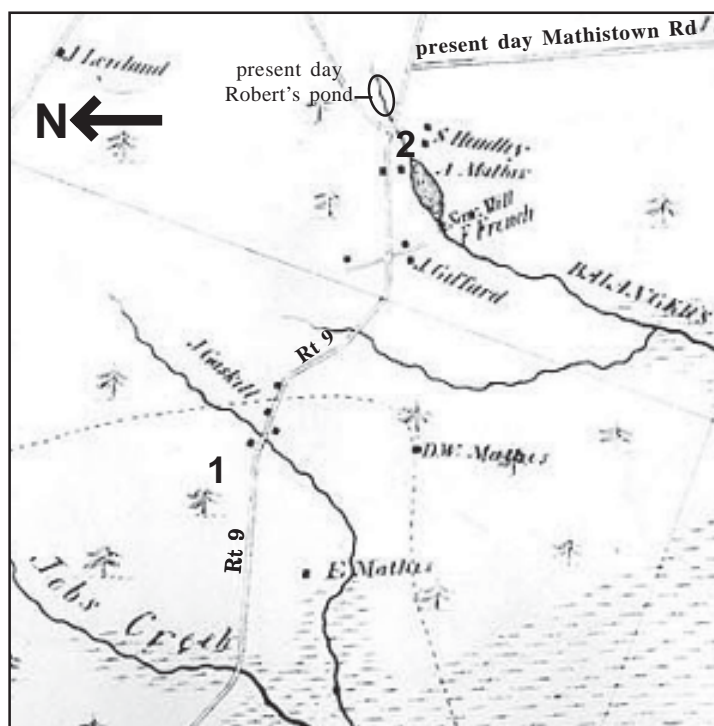
Schooling throughout most of the 1800's was considered a luxury for an agrarian population that was mainly concerned with the endless tasks necessary for surviving the day to day rigors on the family farm. Large families were the rule, and children were needed at home as laborers.

In the early 1800's local government did not consider public education its responsibility. The few schools in Little Egg Harbor were either run by the Quakers, who considered a good education central to their religious principles and offered free schooling, or were operated in private homes for those who could afford to pay the "teacher." In either case attendance was sparse. Since there were no central records kept for these early schools we know neither where, when, or how many there were. Schools run by the township did not evolve until the 1820's when the State of New Jersey authorized township committees and trustees to operate the schools and to raise money for school repairs and for students whose parents were unable to pay tuition.



We are indebted to Leah Blackman for her accounts of early schools in Bass River Township (Photo courtesy of Arnold Cramer)

Leah Blackman in her classic work, The History of Little Egg Harbor Township, briefly mentions [p 217] the early schools in Bass River by stating "In very early times there was a schoolhouse at Bass River and another at Mathistown; it was a log house and stood on the high point of land west of Mathistown brook [Today called Balanger's Creek]." It is likely that the Bass River school she mentions was the Quaker run school at Bass River Neck as discussed in Gazette Issue #12. The old Mathistown log schoolhouse would have been located on the small rise across from Roberts



1849 Otley-Whiteford Map: 1- Approximate location of Leah Blackman's childhood farm; 2- Approximate location of old Mathistown log schoolhouse and the first farmhouse school attended by Leah.

pond across the present day Route 9 where it crosses Balanger's Creek at the Ocean County line [See #2 on 1849 Otley-Whiteford map above].

The first official government documentation of a school in the Bass River area is found in the Little Egg Harbor Township minutes dated March 13, 1832, when Samuel Deacon, Township Clerk, wrote "Resolved that the Bass River school district in future consist of two districts as originally laid off and the present Bass River dividend [funds] be divided between them in proportion to the number of children in each." This indicates that there was only one school in Bass River in 1832 with another to be operated shortly. It is uncertain whether these two districts correspond with the two early schools mentioned by Blackman as she does not list any dates.

We get a few clues regarding other early Bass River schools from another writing of Leah Blackman. She talks briefly about her schooling as a girl in Old Times- County Life in Little Egg Harbor Fifty Years Ago. It was written in the 1880's but not published until November, 2000 by the Tuckerton Historical Society. Leah mentions [p 65] that, when she was nine years old in 1826, she walked a mile and a half to a school held in an old farmhouse. She grew up on a farm in the Mathistown area in the vicinity of the present day walled mansion on Rt. 9 in Bass River Township [See #1 on 1849 Otley Map]. If we travel on Route 9 toward Tuckerton for the 1 ½ miles that Leah walked, we may estimate the approximate location of the first school she attended. That point falls at the Ocean County line at Roberts pond, in the

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ANOTHER THING I REMEMBER

by Almira Cramer Steele

Early Memories of the New Gretna Presbyterian Church

Time was when entire families attended church each Sunday. Some went to Sunday School, some went to morning worship, some to the evening service, and a few went to all three.

I remember Sunday School back in the mid thirties. It was held at 10:00 AM, one hour before the morning worship service. The superintendent, Mrs. Helen Van Doran, led the opening exercises with song, scripture readings, and prayer. Then the classes would begin. The preschoolers went into the little room, as we called it, which is now the kitchen. We didn't have a kitchen or a bathroom in the church at that time, so the little ones and their teacher, Mrs. Mabel Taylor, had that room all to themselves. Everyone else, from first

grade children right through to senior adults, was taught in the sanctuary. The classes were separated by age groups, and the church was a buzz with the teaching of all the different classes. Some of the teachers that I recall were Bess Mathis, Helen Van Doran, Anna Lamson, Lida Loveland, Rita Allen, Alice Mathis, Esther Potter, Mabel Taylor, and Minnie Updike. I believe that the minister usually taught the adults. Bess Mathis was also our piano player, and she would jazz up some of the hymns such as "Beulah Land" and "Do Lord" which the young folk loved. Bess tried so hard to make Sunday School special, and she sure did a great job.



Bess Mathis (1888-1973) taught Sunday school and played piano and organ for years. She touched many hearts with her music. (Photo courtesy of Norman & Ann Mathis)

Father prepare thee on earth,

After the lessons were over, and before we had the closing hymn, a request was made by the superintendent for anyone having a birthday that week to come forward and put their money in a special birthday bank. Everyone would then repeat the following verse to the honorees: "Many happy returns of the day. May sunshine and gladness be given, and may the Dear Father prepare thee on earth, for a beautiful birthday in heaven."

There was a lot of emphasis put on Sunday School back then. The first song we learned was "Jesus Loves Me," the first Bible verse was "John 3:16" and, of course, the birthday verse. I'll bet that everyone who attended Sunday School at that time can still recite the birthday verse word for word. I'll never forget it!

Another thing I remember was the Sunday School pins we received for perfect attendance. The first year we got a small pin with "Presbyterian" written on it with a tiny cross beneath. Second year was a wreath that fit around the pin. The third year was a bar with the year printed on it which hung from the wreath and so on every year. Some of the people had as many as ten or more bars hanging from their pin.



Anna Lamson (1871-1956) taught Sunday School for many years. (Photo courtesy of Floyd & Betty Lamson West)

Christmas Eve was always a very special time for the Sunday School. The younger children spoke little pieces and the older ones might put on a pageant or whatever. The small children were dressed in their Sunday best, and when their names were called, they went on stage to recite their piece. Some of the kids just loved to show off and spoke their parts perfectly, while others were so shy they would hide behind the tall white pillars and hardly said a word. You never knew what the kids were going to do or say, and that was what made it so much fun.

After the entertainment was over, and before everyone went home, the children were rewarded with a box of hard candy and an orange. Believe me, every child looked forward to those gifts on Christmas Eve. Little things meant an awful lot back then.

Of course I can't forget the special parties and other extra activities we enjoyed throughout the years. Sometimes our Sunday School teacher would have a party for her class at her house.



The little room off the sanctuary (now the kitchen) was used as a Sunday School room for the younger children. Claire Kalm Allen's 1958 Sunday School class (l-r): David Hancock, Ruth McAnney, Freddie Allen, Barbara West, & Marilyn West singing a song to the Lord. Claire is playing the piano. Heat was provided by a pot belly stove. (Photo courtesy of Phyllis & Sam Briggs)



Denise Allen (1957-2002), in 1987, and her New Gretna Presbyterian Church Sunday School pin showing 19 years of attendance. (Photo courtesy of Alston & Claire Allen)



BETTY LAMSON WEST'S CLAM POT PIE

There are few families that have lived in New Gretna for several generations, but the name of **Lamson** is one of the oldest families that can claim that recognition. Our featured recipe this issue is from the kitchen of **BETTY LAMSON WEST**.

Ferron and **Dorothy Lamson** had two children, **Betty** and **Varnum** (Bucky). Betty is the wife of **Floyd West**. Betty and Floyd, married in 1950, live on North Maple Avenue in the lovely Victorian home that was built by Betty's great grandfather, **Adolphus** (1829-1895), in 1850.

In addition to being a great cook and a loving mother of four beautiful daughters - **Barbara, Marilyn, Debra and Rebecca** - Betty also was a Registered Nurse. Floyd is retired from the Atlantic Electric Company and had served as mayor of Bass River Township from 1970-84.

CLAM POT PIE is a favorite of Betty and Floyd's daughters. They are sure to be served this delicious meal whenever they come to visit. We hope that you will try it and make it one of your favorites, too.



Ferron (1905-1977) and Dorothy (1903-1991) Lamson, Betty's parents, with two of their granddaughters - Marilyn (l) and Barbara (r) West. Dorothy made clam pot pie but never had a written recipe. (Photo courtesy of Floyd & Betty Lamson West)

POT PIE BROTH

40 medium clams, opened and ready to chop
 ¼ lb salt pork, cut in small pieces
 6 medium-size potatoes, sliced
 2-cups onions, chopped in small pieces
 salt and pepper to taste

- Drain off juice & set aside clams. Reserve 1-cup juice.
- Render the salt pork until tender and brown; stir often.
- Chop clams in small pieces.
- Add sliced potatoes and onions to the rendered salt pork.
- Cover the ingredients with 2 cups water and one cup clam juice.
- Simmer for 10 minutes before adding chopped clams.

POT PIE BISQUIT DOUGH

2-cups flour 6-7 Tbs. shortening
 3 tsp. baking powder 2/3 to ¾ cup milk
 1 tsp. salt

- Measure first three ingredients into a flour sifter. Set in mixing bowl and sift.
- Cut the shortening into mixture until the consistency is like coarse cornmeal.
- Add milk quickly and stir lightly with fork.
- Using a Tablespoon, drop the biscuit dough into broth,
- Allowing 20 to 30 minutes until the biscuit dough is well done.

Use medium size Dutch Oven (about 6 qt.)
Keep lid on Dutch Oven tight as biscuit dough simmers.



Floyd West sits on the front porch of the West's North Maple Avenue home in May, 1964 with his 3 daughters (l-r) Barbara, Marilyn & Debra. Could a clam pie be waiting in the oven? (Photo courtesy of Floyd & Betty Lamson West)



Photo (far left)- Floyd & Betty West at their daughter Barbara's graduation in April, 1973.

Photo (left)- Betty West and the West girls at Ship Bottom in 1966. (l-r) Rebecca, Marilyn, Debra and Barbara.

(Photos courtesy of Floyd & Betty Lamson West)

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

ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES

(Continued from page 1)

same area as the old Mathistown log schoolhouse mentioned earlier. The 1849 Otley-Whiteford map shows a small cluster of houses in this area, so it would not be surprising that one of farm houses was used briefly as Leah's first school.

Schools moved frequently in the old days. This is evidenced by Leah's further comments in "Old Times" that . . .

"a young woman [in Spring, 1827] commensed a school in her mother's weaveshop, a small building detached from the dwelling house. This term consisted of half a quarter [1 1/2 months] . . . the next winter went school in the old farmhouse . . . and in a year or so [c 1829] attended school in one of the first school houses that was built and had to walk four miles . . . the next winter [c 1830] there was a schoolhouse constructed about a quarter mile from the above-said ancient fabricl."

Leah's accounts of early schools in private homes are supported by Edgar Haas, Burlington County Superintendent of Schools, in his 1876 "History of Schools in Burlington County." He talks about Bass River schools from 1835 through 1866 when we can see an evolution from haphazard schools in private homes to separate schoolhouses funded and operated by the Township. He writes:

In 1835, the first school in what is known as district 108 [East Bass River or Mathistown] was kept in a private dwelling by a widow lady who taught but the rudiments of an english education, receiving as compensation for her services, three cents per day from each pupil. From 1838 to 1839, a similar school was taught by Abigail Bartlett. About 1839, the township elected three men as a school committee, who controlled the small amount of public money, dividing it among the schools in the township. Some time after, by the direction of such a committee, a school was opened in a private house by Mary A. Bogan; the teacher than receiving \$1.50 per pupil for a term of seventy two days and "boarding around among the people." Soon after this the township was divided into districts, and a school house was erected in what is known as district 108, in which school was held during the winter months, and occasionally in summer; this continued until 1846, when the Township superintendent assumed the general supervision of the schools. In 1852 or 1853, the district was enlarged ... and the house moved one mile west of its former location, and near where now stands the present school building. In 1866, the house burned ; it took fire while the school was in session, the teacher and pupils barely escaping when the roof fell in. Everything was lost with the exception of the Dictionary and Gazetteer. During the summer following, the present house was erected, at a cost of seven hundred dollars: it is a neat and substantial building, but one whose furniture is more durable, perhaps, than comfortable. Since the erection of this new building, with one or two exceptions, a good school has been kept open eight or nine months each year. at present, it is under the charge of Abigail W. Mathis. Trustees: Benj. F. Headley, Clarkson Alger, Maja B. Mathis D.C. [District Clerk]

County Superintendent Haas' account takes us to the time period in which Bass River Township was formed from Little Egg Harbor. We know from brief County Superintendent of Schools Annual Reports filed in the State Library in Trenton that in May, 1864, that Bass River Township "took off four [school] districts and part of a district" from Little Egg

Harbor. These were the first official Bass River Township one room school houses and will be discussed in the June, 2003 edition of the *Gazette*.

SUMMER IN NEW GRETNA

(Continued from page 8)

day, it added up, and by the end of the summer, I had more money of my own than ever before. I remember Mr. Pepper as a kind, hard-working, quiet man. He was always a true gentleman. He supervised us out in the field, while his wife Viola managed the activities in the packing shed. Some of the other blueberry pickers that summer were Jack Wiseman, Ed Brown, Lizzie Downs, Bessie Dehner, Edna Mathis, and Linda McNeill and her daughter Diane.

I think my mother was concerned that Jack Wiseman and Ed Brown would corrupt me by entertaining me with stories of their exploits at the race track. I learned how the "daily double" works, and who were the fastest horses at the Atlantic City Race Course that summer. One day Ed thought he had a hot tip that a horse named "Teacher" was a good bet to win the seventh race the next day. I announced that fact at the dinner table that evening. Later I overheard my mother say to my grandmother, "I hope that horse loses!" (It did!)



Jack Wiseman (1888-1977) picking blueberries in Pepper's blueberry patch. (Photo courtesy of Myrtle Wiseman Falkinburg)

My sister Cher also had her first summer job in New Gretna. She worked a few summers at the custard stand on the corner of Greenbush Road.

As a teenager, I developed an interest in the history of South Jersey, and my grandfather was a fountain of knowledge. Most of his stories and remembrances were from Washington Township, but he taught me about Bass River as well. For example, one day we were driving to New Gretna on Route 542, and as we crossed the bridge over Ives Branch and Mill Creek, he mentioned that there used to be two grist mills there.

In my 32-year career with the government, I've had the opportunity to travel all over the world, and I've been able to work in places that I never dreamed I would see. But through it all, it's good to have roots. And I feel fortunate that some of my deepest roots are in Wading River and New Gretna.

WHO WE ARE

The Bass River Community Library History Committee members are Harry DeVerter, Steve Eichinger, Jean & Murray Harris, Elaine Mathis, Almira Steele, and Pete Stemmer. You may 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. We thank our guest columnists, Brian Detrick and Mike Allen, for their stories and hope that others are motivated to also send a story to us.

Memories of “Unc” and “Mim” by Mike Allen

On a recent visit to New Gretna, I went to Miller’s cemetery as I usually do. Only this time, it got me to thinking as I walked among the graves. As before, there were more graves and, as I looked at the names of those that I knew, I remembered things about each one of them. As we each pass on, there are fewer of us to remember the ones that have gone before us.



Henry (1891-1978) and Minnie Updike (1904-1994) in the living room of their North Maple Avenue home. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware)

Henry and Minnie Updike are two examples. They lived most of their lives in New Gretna, but now days are all but forgotten. They had no children of their own, but were a big part in the growing up of several, and I was lucky enough to be one of them. Now, we were not really related, just very close family friends, who through the years, seemed more like family all the time.



Hen Updike cut a dashing figure on his Harley as a young man. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware)

Henry Updike, in his younger days, was called “Derb” as he always wore a derby hat and later in life, some called him Henry, others “Hen”. I just called him “Unc”. I don’t know how or why I came to calling him that. Maybe it was just because when I was small that’s what I could say and it stuck for life.

Now you have seen Henry Updike mentioned in several articles in the Gazette, but just who were Henry and

Minnie Updike and what did they do with their lives and for the town?

So, once again, I’ve gone to my resident walking books of knowledge, my Mother and Father. With what they have told me and what I knew about “Mim” and “Unc”, I hope that we can tell you just how important to us and New Gretna they were.

My Mother fondly remembers Minnie Updike, nee Vincent, who was born in Lewes, Delaware. Her father’s sister, Alice, was married to Howard McAnney of Wading River, New Jersey — maybe, when visiting her aunt, she might have met Henry Updike — or she might have met him while she and her family were living in Egg Harbor City, New Jersey — at any rate, they did meet and were married on October 28, 1922. After marrying, they moved to New Gretna and

lived on Hammonton Road until they built their lovely home on North Maple Avenue. They had over 50 years together before Henry passed away in 1978. They didn’t have children of their own, but loved and were dearly loved by nieces, nephews and friends. Minnie remained in New Gretna for a few more years, until failing health called for a move to an assisted living facility. She enjoyed her little apartment until she passed away in January of 1994.

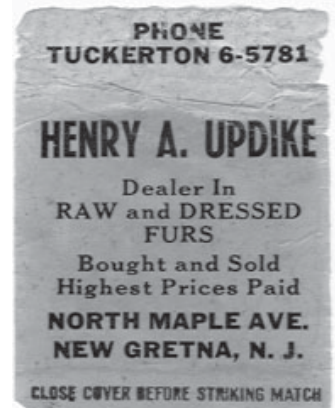


Henry & Minnie had no children; however, they raised Anna Ware, their niece, after the death of Anna’s mother, Sadie Updike Ware. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware)

Minnie was a devoted and dedicated member of the 1st Presbyterian Church of New Gretna. In 1940, or there about, she saw a need for a bible study group for young women, who seemed just past the Sunday School stage — so she formed and became the leader of “The Young Ladies Guild”. That group and new members over the years met every Tuesday evening for a study period and social time. The meetings were held at a different member’s home each week, everyone taking a turn, always including something good to eat. Over the years, the “Guild” as it was finally called, was very active in working for the church. A major project was earning the money (thousands of dollars) to purchase a new Hammond Electric organ for the church. It took a number of years of Old Home Society dinners, cake sales and entertainment to amass the necessary amount, but it was accomplished and that same organ is still in the 1st Presbyterian Church today. What Minnie started those many years ago, lives on in the hearts of the still living “Guild Sisters”. They no longer have meetings, as most are in their late 70’s and 80’s, but the bond between them is still as strong as ever.

Minnie and Henry were a very close couple. In the summer, Minnie oversaw the packing shed for Henry’s blueberries and in later years, as Henry’s health failed, she drove him around on his fur buying trips. Their lives together enriched the lives of all who knew them.

Now as for me, well I remember Mim as a beautiful lady who would listen to a young boy and really hear what you were saying. Some of my fondest memories growing up include going to “Mim’s” and “Unc’s” in the winter time, making snow ice cream and sitting in front of their fireplace. “Mim” was a great cook, and I can’t remember her ever fixing anything I didn’t like. If you went away from the table hungry, it was your fault, she always said.



Henry ran a fur business in the New Gretna area for many years. (Photo courtesy of Harry DeVertter)

PRESBYTERIAN MEMORIES

(Continued from page 2)



(l-r) Linda Potter, Barbara West, Debra West, Sheryl Potter & Marilyn West at Clementon Park Sunday School picnic, circa 1960. (Photo courtesy of Floyd & Betty West)

Mrs. Van Doran was great for that. Other times, we would go roller skating, ice skating, or go to a good movie that we all wanted to see. The very special fun event of the whole year was the fabulous Sunday School picnics [See *Gazette* Issue #5, 12/1999]. Early on we went to the Steeple Chase Pier on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. After the pier burned down, we went to Clementon Park.

These picnics were the highlight of the summer, and everybody went- young, old, and in between. All the kids were so excited! They planned the whole year for it and couldn't wait to get on that bus and go. We all had a good time going, but we were too tired and too blue on the way home because it was over for another year.

The morning worship service was a little more formal than the evening one. Usually, the younger people went to the evening service, but whichever service you chose there usually was a good crowd attending. We always had a nice choir. It was small but had some very beautiful singing voices. Eugene Sears, Helen Sears Carty's father, had an exceptionally good voice and sang many solos. He also played the piano and was choir director for a while. Alice Mathis sang many a solo in her day, and Minnie Shropshire, who also played the piano and sang very nicely, was an asset to the choir as well.



Gene Sears (1893-1979) sang and played the piano in church and for the New Gretna minstrels. (Photo courtesy of Helen Sears Carty)

We had many ministers throughout the years. Some of them were students out of Princeton Theological Seminary who were in New Gretna on weekends and during the summer months. Others were married with families and lived in the manse full time. Among the ones that stand out in my mind

were Rev. George Kress. He was very dramatic when he preached, and he sure held your attention. No one fell asleep when he was in the pulpit! Mr. Osterhaven was another one that impressed me. He preached "Justification by Faith" at almost every evening service. Those three words are still embedded in my memory.

Then there was Ernest Enslin who was a student and a single man when he came to our church. During his stay in New Gretna cupid shot his arrow, and Ernie ended up marrying my sister, Erva. So to say the least, he really made a great impression on all the Cramer family.

Stan Wilson was another minister almost everyone in town admired. He wasn't only a favorite of the Presbyterians. He was liked by everybody. His aim was to become a missionary in Korea, and he fulfilled that dream. He was a great guy and an excellent pastor.

Dr. Charles McKirachan was another outstanding minister. He had retired from the ministry and was living at his home on Long Beach Island when he heard we needed a minister at our church. He accepted our offer, and he and Mrs. McKirachan made their home in the manse for some time. He will always be remembered for his excellent sermons, and both of them for their genuine hospitality.



Pastor Ernie Enslin (1917-1976) married my sister Erva. (Photo courtesy of Almira Cramer Steele)

There were many others who served our church throughout the years, but these were a few that impressed me for different reasons.

Some of the names of those old families that attended our church regularly were Allen, Cramer, Kalm, Lamson, Loveland, Mathis, Potter, Robbins, Sears, Shropshire, Taylor, Updike, and Wiseman. Today a few of the extended families of those mentioned are still attending our church. Even those who have moved away and visit their relatives in Bass River, from time to time, will make an effort to come and worship with us on the Sundays they are in town.

Over the years our beautiful little church has survived through some good times and some bad times, but we've never given up hope. In August, 2001 we celebrated our 150th anniversary, and we were very proud of our accomplishment. By the grace of God, may the church be spiritually active for many more years to come, serving our community well and welcoming all who choose to come and worship with us.

Gazette Subscriptions

A yearly subscription (2 issues) of the Gazette is available for anyone who sends 2 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 2 envelopes are used. It may then be renewed by sending 2 or more additional envelopes.

Memories of “Unc” and “Mim”

(Continued from page 5)

My Father worked with and for Henry Updike many years and remembers “Hen” as not one to sit back and go with the flow. No, he wanted to be in control of his own destiny. He was tight with his money, and a penny saved really was a penny earned. He was a veteran of World War I, and upon his return, he went to work building a life for him and the future Mrs. Updike. He was involved in many different types of things including District Fire Warden program, cranberry bog building/operations, blueberry grower/operations, a local furrier and a salesman. I do believe if there had been an Eskimo around, “Unc” could and would have sold him ice.



As my father remembers, “Hen”, as he always called him, was the first to have a motorcycle in the area. It was an “Indian”, the type that was used in World War I, and he might have gotten it from Army surplus. Now “Hen” was in charge of making the dams for cranberry bogs in The Wading River area and above Leek Town for Mr. Gosler, who lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and came down once a week to check on the work being done in the cranberry bogs. Hen was considered the professional turf layer for the dams. The turf had to be cut a certain way, on a slant so that they would interlock a certain way – so brush could grow up between the pieces, thus knitting them together to form one solid bank on the dam. Prim brush was the turf that was used, and that was found in the lowlands and along the edge of the swamp – it grew about 1 ½ foot tall. It was sawed off with a scythe and the turf underneath was then cut into sections.

I used to cut the sod for “Hen” and hauled the sand that was used – the dams had to be well constructed, as when the bogs were flooded they were required to hold up to 9 feet of water over a twenty acre area. The dams also had flood gates that when opened would let the water drain off the bogs and into Wading River for summer. The cranberries grew during the summer and were harvested in the fall with hand scoops, not as done now days. They were then cleaned and, if stored in a cool dry place, could be kept most of the winter.

During the summer months “Hen” used to come around in an old red truck and buy wild huckleberries, cherries, blackberries – that he shipped to Philadelphia for markets in that area. The old truck had wooden spoke wheels and solid rubber tires – he probably took them to Hammonton for shipment by train or a big truck to Philadelphia – he paid 8 cents a quart for the huckleberries – 32 quarts to a crate – 10 cents a quart for wild cherries and wild blackberries – 32 quarts to a crate.

Henry served his country in World War I. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware)

In later years, “Hen” and Ben Cavileer (Lower Bank), Earl Hill and Bill McDonald were the first ones in this area to plant and grow cultivated blueberries. All these patches are now overgrown and gone back to the wild, but for many years they provided a very good income for the growers and a source of summer work for many people in the area.

“Unc” and Mim’s blueberry patch was just across the Wading River bridge. Howard Ware (his nephew and my uncle) worked with “Unc” clearing the land and grubbing the stumps out by hand. Then, many different types of berries were planted. Small varieties included “Junes”, “Cabbots”, “Rubbles” and “Weymouth”, while the larger berries were known as “Atlantics” and “Jerseys”. “Concord” was a medium size, and a giant variety called “Dixies” was my favorite as it didn’t take too many to make a pint. I can relate to this well. As a young boy, I picked in that patch for many years. You were paid 5 cents a pint, but let me tell you “Unc” made sure he got his 5 cents worth out of each pint you picked. You carried your pint boxes in trays that held 3 across and 5 pints long. Well, with “Unc”, there were no gaps between pints, and the tray had to be filled to the top all the way across. This meant a net gain of 3 pints per tray, so in reality you picked 18 and got paid for 15 pints. Also, there better not be any green ones, leaves or stems mixed in. Plus, after you picked a row, he would check to see if you had been wasting his berries by picking green ones and throwing them on the ground. If so, he would tell you. Believe me, he wanted everything just so, and if you didn’t do it right, he told you so.

Additionally, he made his own packing crates, which held 12 pints and taught me how to make them, too. After about the first 100 and a real sore thumb, he said that mine were almost as good as his, and he would start paying 2 cents per crate. You could make about 15 - 20 an hour. Boy, talk about minimum wages! I can truthfully say “Unc” never lost money on blueberries.

Now when you think about it, Henry and Minnie Updike were just a couple of average people who loved New Gretna and made their home here. They were well liked and I don’t remember ever hearing a cross word spoken of them. “Unc” loved his duck hunting, but mostly they were just home body people. The “Guild” formed Christian friendships that have lasted over 60 years. The dams that “Unc” and my father built have stood the test of time and now what was



once cranberry bogs above Leek Town are now part of the Timber Line Camp Grounds. Additionally, look at all the blueberry farm operations around today. Did they leave a lasting impression on New Gretna and the surrounding area? You better believe it!

Henry loved duck hunting. He had duck blind at Cranberry Point on the Wading River. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware)

SUMMER IN NEW GRETNA

by Brian Detrick

My father, Rev. R. Blame Detrick, was a Methodist minister, so my family moved frequently when I was growing up. But one constant for my sister and me was that we spent our summer vacations with our grandparents. My mother, Marguerite Detrick, is the daughter of James and Ruth Updike, who lived in the white house on Turtle Creek Road in Wading River (which is now my mother's residence). Horace Somes, who was about my age, also spent parts of his summers in Wading River with his grandparents, Howard and Alice McAnney, who lived just down the road from Jim and Ruth Updike. Horace and I became lifelong friends, and today Horace, his wife Barbara, and their sons live at the old McAnney homestead. Although my grandparents lived on the Washington Township side of Wading River, we had many connections to New Gretna as well, and I have happy memories of summers in New Gretna as a boy.

Some of the misty memories from the earliest days of my life come from New Gretna. Two of the people of whom I have my earliest recollections were Clarence and Helen Mathis. Helen Mathis was one of my first Sunday school teachers when I was not



Clarence (1888-1964) and Helen (1891-1976) Mathis are a part of my early memories of New Gretna. (Photo courtesy of Ann & Norman Mathis)

much more than an infant. One of the most ancient images in my mind is a mental picture of the Gulf gasoline pumps in front of Clarence Mathis's store. My early memories also go back to the time when there was no Garden State Parkway, and I remember the old iron bridge carrying us across the Mullica River on our way toward Atlantic City.

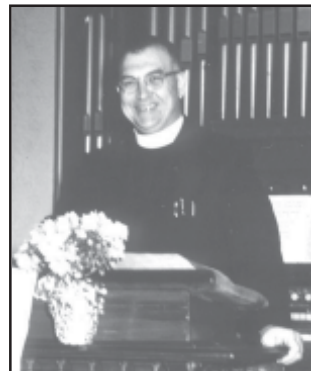
We often visited relatives in New Gretna. I recall many visits to my grandfather's brother, Henry Updike, and his wife, Aunt Minnie, at their house near the river on North Maple Avenue. My grandfather and Uncle Hen had a friendly rivalry over who had the best garden each year, and as we walked



Many people who live in New Gretna today do not remember the old iron bridge over the Mullica. It predated the parkway bridge. (Photo courtesy of the William Augustine Collection, Rutgers University Library)

through the field, there were many discussions about how the lima beans, corn, and sweet potatoes were doing. I also remember visiting my grandparents' nephew, Howard Ware, and his wife Sara, at the house on North Maple Avenue where Howard still lives, and we occasionally visited Uncle Joe and Aunt Lizzie Mathis, who lived in the house on Route 9 where farm produce is now sold.

My parents' closest friends were Bill and Naomi Maurer and Jim and Sally Post. Bill and Jim were my dad's golfing buddies, and I learned to play the game of golf as part of a foursome with them. Bill and Naomi Maurer lived in the house on Route 9 where Naomi and her daughter Sharon still live. The New Gretna Post Office was located in their home for many years. When I was a small boy, Jim and Sally Post lived in the large house between Maurers' place and St. Paul's Methodist Church. In the 1950s, they moved to Absecon. However, they remained active members of St. Paul's Church, and each Sunday morning, they made the trip back to New Gretna for church services.



Rev. Uncle is the first pastor that I remember at St. Paul's Methodist Church. (Photo courtesy of Naomi Maurer)

The church was the center of our spiritual and social lives. The earliest pastor at St. Paul's of whom I have any recollection was Rev. Joseph Uncle, in the 1950s. My grandparents frequently invited the pastor and his family to our place for dinner, and I remember George Starsmeare, Herman DeJong, Ray Woolbright, and George Gross coming to our house for sumptuous meals prepared by my grandmother.

It was George Gross who encouraged me to become more active in the life of the church. Beginning in the late 1960s, he sometimes asked me to speak in the Sunday morning service, or to take over his Sunday school class when he was out of town. Today I am a lay speaker and a Bible study teacher in my church, and I can trace the roots of this back to my first efforts at St. Paul's Methodist Church in New Gretna. It still saddens me that years later, in the late 1970s, Mr. Gross had a great deal of controversy with the members of the church, and he eventually resigned his position. I will always remember George Gross as a man who saw more ability in me than I saw in myself, and he encouraged me to develop and use my talents and abilities. And for that I will always be grateful.

St. Paul's Church had an active youth group in the 1960s, and I remember Bible studies in the fellowship hall and pizza parties in the parsonage. The youth group also organized trips to Philadelphia to watch a Phillies baseball game.

And I remember the church dinners. Who can forget the church dinners?! The Methodists in New Gretna have always known how to eat!

My first summer job was in New Gretna. In 1964, I picked blueberries for Harry Pepper. He lived in the house next to the Methodist parsonage, and a dirt road led from behind his house to his blueberry field, about a quarter-mile behind the church. Seven cents a pint didn't seem like much, but day by

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