

# BASS RIVER GAZETTE

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

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## THE CHALKLEY CRAMER FAMILY OF NEW GREтна

by Ruth Cramer Soles

Chalkley Sears Cramer was married to Carrie Frances Johnson on July 14, 1879 at the M. E. Church in Port Republic, N. J. by the Rev. J. F. Heilermann. Witnesses were Mrs. J. F. Heilermann and the bride's brother Kirkwood Johnson. Chalkley Sears Cramer was from Bass River and Carrie Frances Johnson was from Port Republic.

The story goes that Chalkley built a home in New Gretna on Route 9 just like her home in Port Republic so that she would not be homesick when she came to him as a bride. As the years went on, more rooms were added to the house. In fact, when the present kitchen was added, the outside weather boards were left intact and remained until recently.

I can remember as a little girl, I loved to come down the stairway with my hand on the smooth banister and when I got to the newel post, I loved to pick up the little round decorative piece of wood, feel and look at it, and then put it back. In the sitting room, was an old pump organ which was a lot of work to play but a great experience. I think I finally played the hymn "Face to Face" on it when I got older. In the parlor, which was not used very much except for funerals, was a lovely piano. This always sounded like a harpsichord to me. They probably used this parlor for company but I do not remember that.

Nanny (Carrie Frances) was a school teacher, a Sunday school teacher, and a piano teacher and was known as Aunt Carrie to all the children in New Gretna. Their children were Theora Bell Cramer (born 8/24/1882, died 3/26/1975) never married; Bessie M. (born 9/25/1888, died 10/17/73) married Howard Zebulon Mathis; John Emery Cramer (born 5/1/1892 died 3/4/1931) married Mary Martha Quick on 2/15/1915.



Chalkley Cramer (1856-1927) and Carrie Johnson Cramer (1857-1936) lived on New York Road (Rt. 9) just north of the General Store. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

Chalkley earned a living for the family with his general store which is now in Smithville. Theora ran the store for years after his death and cared for her mother until her death. Theora then lived alone and ran the store. She told me one time that she dreamed that she was sitting at the window of the guest room looking out at the side door of the store and her father was standing there cleaning his fingernails with his penknife (as he always did). She asked him what he was doing there.

He told her that he had been looking over her stock and invoices and that she was not charging enough for her stock. She went into the store the next morning and checked it all for herself and she was not charging enough to make a profit! She also told me of a dream she had another time when her father returned under the same circumstances and told her to keep on caring for her mother as she had been and that he would be coming back for her in a short time. It was not long after that dream that Nanny died! She also told me about the time the stone fell over in the cemetery and Grandpa had it replaced and the stone man brought the old one to the house



New York Road (Rt. 9), circa 1910, looking north from Chalkley Cramer's home, was a dirt road with gravel sidewalks until it was paved in the late 1920's. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

on a horse drawn wagon and asked Grandpa what he wanted to do with it. Grandpa put it at the foot of the small steps at the side of the house where it remained until it was stolen a few years ago. I am not sure, but I think it was the grave stone of Daniel Cramer.

Grandpa had live chickens and ducks which he used to feed every day. It seems that one of the ducks kept pecking at his cuff whenever he came out to feed them. He finally found out that this particular duck appeared to be blind and the other ducks got the feed first so he would put the feed in his cuff for this one duck to eat. I only wish I had been smart enough to have a tape recorder handy when, in recent years, Aunt Theora would talk and tell the stories and any information she had about the family.

I have been told that Chalkley's estate was worth about \$100,000 when he died in 1929, but that is a little hard to believe, as that was depression time and the banks had failed in Atlantic City where he had his accounts. However, Theora was executrix of his will and when any money was eventually paid on these accounts, we received what was coming to us, but it was usually in postage stamps because it was so little!

Eventually, because of inflation, Theora had to apply to the State of New Jersey for old age assistance as she ran out of money. She had always believed that she had enough to live on for the rest of her life.

That is one of the reasons she sold the general store to Mrs. Noyes who owned the Smithville Inn and was gathering old buildings to make a "village". When the store was moved, the work men removed the



The Cramer General Store, circa 1930's, was run by Chalkley's daughter, Theora, after he passed away in 1927. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

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# ANOTHER THING I REMEMBER

by Almira Cramer Steele

## The Bass River CCC Camp

After the great depression in 1929 when the banks closed their doors causing many people to lose their life savings was a very hard time for an awful lot of families. People were standing in bread lines in order to get something to eat, especially in the cities. Living around here, in the Bass River area, was a little bit different, however, as far as food was concerned. There was always plenty of seafood available, like fish, clams, oysters, crabs, eels, mussels, and scallops.

In the summer every family had a little vegetable garden which provided fresh vegetables all summer long and canned vegetables for the winter months as well. It was not uncommon to see a chicken pen in the back yards where eggs were gathered and chickens were waiting to supply the families with a good Sunday dinner. During hunting season, game was brought home by the hunters such as duck, pheasant, quail, rabbit and deer. So, really, we were well supplied with a variety of things to eat, but very little else.

When Franklin Roosevelt became President in the 1930's, one of the many programs he started to assist people during the Depression was the Civilian Conservation Corp, also known as the CCC. It was a work program for those who needed help and were willing to work for it. These camps were scattered throughout the United States, and Bass River was one of the locations chosen for the project. The Bass River camp was situated at the head of the Bass River in the Fir Bridge section of town, just off East Greenbush Road. There were also nearby camps in Port Republic and Green Bank.

Food, lodging, and clothing were provided for everyone in the program plus wages of \$1.00 a day. Lots of times there was more than one family member in the program and most of those wages were sent back home to help their families survive.

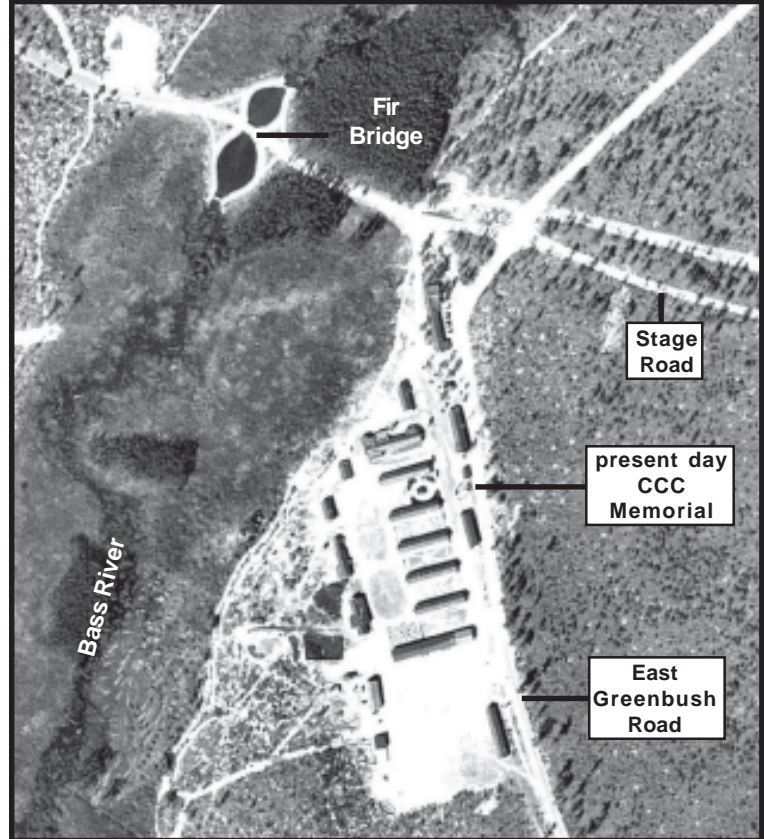
Many of Bass River's local citizens touched the lives of those in the CCC camp. Ben Broome and Russell Adams who owned and operated a sawmill in town prepared the lumber and built several of the buildings used by the CCC in the Bass River camp. Mrs. Rebecca Mathis, who lived not far from the camp, was often asked by the men to alter some of the donated clothing so that the clothes would fit a little better. She always accommodated them, and on payday, they showed their appreciation.



Miss Margaret who taught school at Bass River for 40 years helped many of the CCC men with their reading skills. (Photo courtesy of Naomi Maurer.)

Unfortunately, there were a few of the men in the CCC Camp that had very little education. Miss Margaret Adams who was my primary, first and second grade teacher volunteered her services a couple of evenings each week in order to teach those who needed help to learn to read and write. I am sure there were other local people who also shared their time and talent in different ways, helping those young men to feel at home away from home in whatever way they could.

The jobs of the CCC Camp employees were mostly developing and protecting the forest. They built and repaired roads, cut brush, planted trees, fought forest fires, and helped build a ball field and small addition at our local school. They did whatever needed to be done to improve the surrounding forest. Officers were appointed to oversee the work and the workers. I believe that this work program was the



A 1940 aerial photo of the Bass River CCC camp shows the location of the barracks and other buildings in relation to Fir Bridge and Stage & East Greenbush roads. (Photo courtesy of NJDEP, Bureau of Tidelands Management.)

beginning of what is now our beautiful Bass River State Forest as it exists today.

Even though the CCC camp men worked hard, they also had time to relax. Entertainment was provided for all those who wanted to take advantage of it. Pool tables and card tables were set up where the men could compete in the game of their choice. Movies were shown several times a week and, on special occasions, a band was scheduled for an evening of fun. Several of the locals joined in on these events and had a great time. The camp also published a camp newsletter called "Mosquito Bites" which is available in the New Jersey History section of our Bass River Community Library.

Once in a while there was a little excitement in the ranks to make things a little more interesting, I guess. Lights out in the barracks was at 10 PM. Tom Watson, a Bass River resident who worked and slept at the CCC Camp, was a pretty good shot with a revolver. He had worked very hard that day and had gone to bed just before 10 PM. Ten o'clock came and went and the lights were still on. He called three times for the lights to be turned out, but no one answered his call. Tom calmly took out his pistol and shot out every light bulb in the building. That took care of that! I hope everyone got a good night's sleep after all that commotion.



Tom Watson who worked for a time at the Bass River CCC camp sits with his granddaughter Marge. Tom was a crack shot with a pistol. (Photo courtesy of Bob & Marge Sutton.)



# The Bass River CCC Camp

(Continued from page 2)



Owen and Helen Sears Carty in 1941. Owen came to the Bass River CCC camp from Pleasantville, N.J. and settled in the New Gretna area with his local bride. He became an asset to the community as did other CCC men who chose to stay in the area with their local brides. (Photo courtesy of Helen Sears Carty.)

Many of the officers and workers stationed at the Bass River CCC camp were lucky enough to have won the hearts of several of the local girls. To name a few – **Owen Carty married Helen Sears**, the daughter of Eugene and Vera Allen Sears. Owen went in the army shortly after their marriage, and they lived in Pleasantville for three years before coming back to New Gretna. In 1955, they moved to the house built by Helen's uncle, Washy Allen, and had a daughter, Joyce. Helen still lives in the family house on Rt. 9 across the street from

the New Gretna House. **Raymond Clayton married Marie Allen**, daughter of Everett and Elsie Elbertson Allen. They moved to Lakewood, N.J., Raymond's home town. **Ed Greene married Helen Mathis** who lived with her parents, Daniel and Mary Patterson Mathis, on the east corner of Amasas Landing Road and Route 9 where the Becker family now lives.

**Ambrose Pitts married Leila Mathis**. They had two daughters, Jean and Barbara, and made their home in Arkansas and, later, Memphis, Tenn. Leila frequently visited her parents, Clarence and Helen Gerew Mathis, family, and friends. We were always happy to see her when she came back home. **Sheldon Campbell married Charlotte Cramer**, daughter of Gid and Mabel Jones Cramer who lived in the Squab Hill section of North Maple Avenue in the present residence of the Sellner family. **Jim MacDonald married Julia Archer**. They had one son, James, Jr., and made their home in Tuckerton for a while.

**Horace Somes married Mary Cramer**. Sadly, Mary was killed in an automobile accident soon after their marriage. **Horace later married Dorothea McAnney from Wading River**. They had two sons, Horace and Frank who still live in Wading River with their families. They continue the family tradition of operating the Wading River Christmas Tree Farm on Turtle Creek Road.

Some of the local men who joined the Civilian Conservation Corps were Bud Allen, Harry Allen and his sons Ben and Leon, Bob Adams, Elton Carr, Renard Wiseman, Tom Watson of pistol shooting fame, Gene Sears, Lou Hedeveary, and Ralph Loveland. Most of them lived at home and reported for work at the CCC camp each week day. Ben Allen says that the dollar a day that they earned helped the family through some pretty rough times.



The CCC memorial at the upper end of East Greenbush Road has a series of plaques and an adjacent photo display recognizing the achievements of the Bass River CCC camp. One of the bronze plaques on display is a memorial to CCC men Stanley Carr, Edward Sullivan, and John LaSalle who lost their lives, on 5/25/1936, fighting a forest fire in the area. (7/22/04 photo)

Eventually, with the start of WW II, the economy improved, jobs were opening up, and the men were able to find work and support their families. The CCC camps were no longer needed and became a part of history. The Bass River CCC barracks were then used to house World War I Veterans who had no place to live. That lasted until the WW I vets dwindled down to a precious few, and then the camp closed for good. Today, all the buildings of the CCC camp west of East Greenbush Road have been torn down, and the site is just a memory of days gone by. Only a stone monument remains, just a stone's throw from the CCC camp barracks site, honoring the men of the CCC and their work in the area and reminding us of the camp's existence.

We have thousands of visitors every year going to Lake Absegami with its sandy beach surrounded by cabins, shelters, and campsites. I believe credit for this valuable recreational facility is due, in part, to the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps who took the first steps in the beautification of a very rewarding project which is now the well maintained and well protected Bass River State Forest.

*Anyone having any photos, stories, or other information regarding the Bass River CCC camp, please contact Almira Steele, c/o Bass River Community Library, PO Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224.*



A 1936 photo of the officers and men at the Bass River CCC camp, Company 225, Camp S-55, shows some of the camp buildings that were built from lumber provided by Ben Broome and Russel Adams from their sawmill located off Allentown Road (North Maple Avenue) in New Gretna. A special thank you to Bass River Forest Superintendent Cynthia Coritz for her assistance in sharing CCC photos. (Photo courtesy of the Bass River State Forest photo archives.)

## CHALKLEY CRAMER FAMILY

(Continued from page 5)

roof to be able to get it under any wires on the way. When Mrs. Noyes arrived to watch the moving, the workmen were standing up in the loft throwing out old bottles etc. on to the ground. She almost had a heart attack! I wonder how many were lost.

Speaking of old bottles, when my grandmother was ill with diabetes she had a hard time sleeping. Now, my grandmother was dead set against liquor and was a member of the WCTU (so they told me) and fought against the doctor prescribing a small amount of whiskey for her at bedtime but Aunt Theora said she finally began to look forward to it each night.

When I was a little girl, I visited them every summer and remember that in the bathroom there was a Jar with my grandmother's toe in it in some kind of liquid. When this toe was removed because of gangrene, she wanted it saved as she did not want to go to her maker without all of her limbs. I have no idea if it was buried with her or not.



Chalkley's daughter, Theora (circa 1901), ran the family store after Chalkley died in 1927. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

I don't remember what they did about someone else being there. I remember her buying me my first pair of beach pajamas - wide legs, and a hat to match in a blue and white flowered material.

When my visit with them was over, they would put me on the bus to Seaside Heights, or rather Toms River as that was as far as the bus went, where my cousin Newt would pick me up and take me to my other grandparents' house at 322 Lincoln Avenue in Seaside Heights where I also had a lot of fun with the them (Frank A. & Margaret Kuhn Quick).

Incidentally, Newt was in the Coast Guard in Seaside park and I used to walk with him on this tour down the boardwalk but I could never go beyond the gate which led into the Phipps Estate which is now Island Beach State Park. Newt was sure one of my favorite cousins.

When I was in New Gretna, I did a lot of walking to the center of town and the mosquitoes were horrible. When I returned to Nanny's house, they practically bathed me in witch hazel. I remember going swimming with another favorite cousin, Mildred and her cousin Leila. We would swim under the old bridge on route 9 and had to dive into the water to get away from the greenhead flies. Mildred was

When I visited them in the summer, Aunt Theora would take me to Atlantic City for a day, going by bus which would stop out front of the house. We usually had lunch in the M. E. Blatt department store up in the tea room on the balcony. It sure was great. . . That was when you got all dressed up to walk the boardwalk. I remember going on the Steel Pier and seeing the big white horse that jumped off the tower platform, movies, amateur shows, bands and orchestras, and all the displays. Thinking back, this probably was a treat for Aunt Theora too as she had to care for her mother and the store.



Mildred and her brother, Jack, were cousins of Ruth Cramer Soles. Ruth enjoyed her New Gretna visits with them. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

## THE OLD GENERAL STORE at Smithville Inn



This Century old store was moved intact to Smithville Inn from New Gretna, N. J. in 1957 and was restored to its original air of usefulness and congeniality.

The aroma of freshly ground coffee, the display of old fashioned penny candies, the large cracker barrel, the pickle barrel and the pot-bellied stove conjure up memories of the warmth and security of our wonder-filled childhood days.

Open Every Day Including Mondays for  
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Our new telephone number is Milton 1-7777

LOCATED 6 MILES NORTH OF ABSECON ON  
NEW YORK ROUTE 9  
ON GARDEN STATE PARKWAY — USE EXIT 48  
AT THE MULLICA RIVER  
ETHEL and FRED NOYES, Possessors

A 1950's flyer advertising Chalkley Cramer's General store after it had been moved to the historic village of Smithville. It still stands today across the lane from the Smithville Inn. (Courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

about five years older than I, and she and Leila seemed to be so grown up! I don't remember much about my cousin Jack, but I guess he was busy with his friends and did not care much about being with a girl cousin. - No hard feelings - boys were that way.

I remember that there was a screen door between each room of my grandparents' house - I guess to keep the mosquitoes from going to one room to the other. They had coal stoves and no bathroom when I was little and the coal shed was just outside of the kitchen door. When they would sit and talk in the sitting room, I would try to sit on the horsehair sofa but I kept sliding off and the horsehair would stick. When they finally put me to bed, they would carry an oil lamp upstairs and leave it outside in the hall so I wouldn't be afraid. Chamber pots under the beds and wash basins on the washstands are another memory. Also, the outhouse with the Sears catalog for paper! They finally had a bathroom installed in the smallest bedroom but my grandfather never had a bath in the tub as he died suddenly.

Nanny made the best rice pudding I have ever tasted and kept it in a big blue enamel pan in the closet in the dining room, which was just cool enough. The basement was their cold cellar - no ice box that I can remember. So many good memories . . . We had so much when we were too young to appreciate it and so little later during the depression. I have letters written between my grandmother Cramer and my mother after my father died that sure do make for sad times.

The people in New Gretna fascinated me - the lady who had all gold teeth in her mouth, Mrs. Bozarth, and the biggest man I ever saw who was always sweaty, Asbury. Also, the fact that a lady did the wallpaper. The one memory that stands out in my mind is of Uncle Zeb who



# CHALKLEY CRAMER FAMILY

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Ruth's uncle Zeb and Aunt Bess Mathis were special people in her life. When Bess was young she helped her sister, Theora, tend the family General Store. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

always had the heartiest laugh of anyone I ever knew until he was in that terrible accident. It happened when a bunch of New Gretna men were fighting a forest fire and they all fell asleep and hit a pole or a tree. Uncle Zeb's throat was cut almost from ear to ear and his jugular vein was cut too. People who knew him all his life did not recognize him lying on the ground. A CCC young man came along and found that he was still alive. He pulled the stuffing out of the seat in the car, packed his throat with it, and held the jugular vein together all the way to the Atlantic City hospital and saved Uncle Zeb's life. He later received a medal for this. Uncle Zeb got well but his laugh was never the same.

Nanny was a wonderful person and Aunt Theora was too. I can

still see Aunt Theora washing Nanny's feet so carefully (in the kitchen) as with diabetes that was important. Also, they made the best cocoa with condensed milk that I ever tasted and have not been able to make myself. It was a game to see how many bubbles I could pick up with a spoon. Aunt Theora had to make a special kind of muffin or biscuit for Nanny to eat but I didn't like them. Thanksgiving was a special time too - all the family around the table in the dining room and all the food and stories. Nanny used to make clam fritters but to this day I can't find the right combination to make them as she did.

The first time my mother went to meet my father's people, she went on the train from Trenton to Tuckerton where my grandfather met her with a horse and carriage. As she stepped off the train, she broke her heel off her shoe and was very embarrassed to meet them hobbling along. When she and my father were married, Nanny told my father that he should never complain about anything Mary cooked as she would be doing her best! However, she was a very good cook. When we ate dinner we had to mind our manners . . . and we could not feed our dog from the table but we had a neighbor, Mrs. MacRobert (Mrs.

Mac to us) who always fed the dog when he (my father) wasn't looking.

Christmas was a special time for us . . . My brother had a very large train display. A few weeks before Christmas, my parents would remove their furniture from the front bedroom (I don't remember where they put it all) and would sleep in another room. I don't remember the sleeping arrangements as Jr. had to sleep some place too. But, anyway, all our toys and the train display were in the front bedroom and the tree was downstairs in the living room. An employee from my father's hardware store would come and put up the train display and as there was no lock on that door, they would tell us that if we peeked through the keyhole, the elves would spit in our eye! It was great fun. One year Jr. got a scooter and we were scolded for riding it up and down the hall, making



Ruth's brother, John Emery, Jr., also enjoyed his visits to his grandparents Route 9 home adjacent to the General Store in New Gretna. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

noise while they were trying to sleep. I guess they had just got to bed when we were up. This reminds me of the times David and Ruth Anne rolled marbles on the bare floor between the dining room and living room when Wal and I were trying to sleep!

My father and Aunt Bess were great story tellers. They, or Aunt Theora, told me that when they were little and Grandpa had the store, they had better clothes than the local children. So, when they received new shoes, they would walk to the center of town, away from their house, and scuff the new shoes in the dirt so they would not make the other kids feel bad that they didn't have new shoes. Also, when my father first went to school, Nanny dressed him all up and the kids would hit and pick on him and damage his clothes. Grandpa finally insisted that she dress him like the other kids and that ended that!



The Chalkley and Carrie Cramer house on Rt. 9 in New Gretna, two houses south of the present day Post Office, is presently the home of Thomas & Barbara Repsher. The store which can be seen to the right of the house is still located in the Historic Village of Smithville. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

I almost forgot the funniest story of all. When Theora and Bess were young, they had to wait on the customers in the general store. When a customer entered the store, a bell would ring in the house and someone would run out to take care of the customer. In the winter, many of the local men would congregate in the store and stand around the stove to keep warm. When a certain one of them came into the store neither of the girls wanted to wait on him as he smelled so bad! The story goes that when this man died, the undertaker took off his clothes and proceeded to bathe him. It took a lot to do that as the dirt was caked on his body. As he scrubbed, he saw something shining and found that this man had a Civil War uniform stuck to his body and the buttons were still on it! They always thought that he had been disappointed in love and never changed his clothes or washed after that.

When you think about it, Chalkley and Carrie were married in 1879 and born in 1856 and 1857 which means they were alive when the Civil War ended in 1865 and also if you study about the Indians, the Indians were still fighting out West during their lifetime! Sure makes me feel old to think that I knew someone who was alive at that time even though they were children!

*Ruth Cramer Soles, the daughter of John Emery and Mary Quick Cramer, was the granddaughter of Chalkley and Carrie Cramer. We are thankful that she shared her family photos and story with us before she was called home on October 25, 2000.*



Ruth Cramer Soles and her dog, Ace. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

## Ebenezer Tucker

(Continued from page 8)

and practice at Mt. Holly which was, and still is, the seat of government for Burlington County. With the lack of modern day transportation and communications, it was necessary for Ebenezer to be in residence at Mt. Holly much of the time. Tucker was appointed a "Justice of the Peace" for Little Egg Harbor with the adoption of New Jersey's Constitution in 1784. That appointment was made because of his vast knowledge of maritime law which eventually led to his appointment as a Judge of the Burlington County courts.

Ebenezer held many offices of trust in his lifetime. He was a Freeholder for Burlington County from Little Egg Harbor from 1816-1824. He was also a lay judge for the County of Burlington from 1820-1825 where he served in the Courts of Common Pleas and as a judge of the Orphan's Court. He was elected to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Congress in which he served from 1825-1829. He served in that great body with two future United States presidents, James K. Polk and James Buchanan, as well as the famous Tennessee frontiersman, "Davy" Crockett. During his tenure in that august body, Ebenezer never spoke on the floor of the house, nor did he ever introduce any legislation to be voted on.

Tuckerton became a ship building center, and Ebenezer went into ship building. He had for a long time been supplying planks & timber to the area ship builders. He was the owner of a saw mill and several large tracts of standing timber in the area which provided him with a ready supply of timber for his saw mill.

Ebenezer was involved in many enterprises in the area during his lifetime. One that did not go to fruition was the proposed "Camden & Egg Harbor Railroad" which had received its charter March 10, 1836. The railroad had authorized capital of \$200,000.00 to build and to operate a line from Camden to Quaker Bridge, McCartyville (later to become Harrisville), and on to Tuckerton. That project fell through and the line was never started. Thus, Ebenezer Tucker never became a railroad baron.

The district of Little Egg Harbor was named a Port of Receiving in 1791 with Ebenezer named the Solicitor for the port under the supervision of Aaron Dunham, the Collector of the Port of Entry at Burlington as documented in the Congressional Record of 1791. Lambertville, in Hunterdon County, was also under the supervision of Dunham at the Port of Burlington. Five years later, in 1796, the District of Little Egg Harbor was made a Port of Entry with Ebenezer Tucker as the Collector of the port.

There are many versions to be found as to how Tuckerton acquired its name. We do know that the village had many names over the

years, before being named for its most prominent citizen, Ebenezer Tucker. Through his influence, Tuckerton became the first postal town in Burlington County on January 1, 1798. At that time there were no more than a dozen postal towns in the state. Tucker served as Postmaster from 1806-1825, when he resigned from those duties to become a member of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Congress. He would again serve as postmaster of the Tuckerton office from 1831 to the hour of his death in September of 1845 at the age of eighty eight.

In the year 1818, Tucker became a member of the Masonic fraternity, by petitioning Mt. Holly Lodge #18 for membership. Two years later, he along with eight other members of Mt. Holly Lodge, petitioned the Grand Lodge of New Jersey at New Brunswick to form a York Rite Lodge at Tuckerton. That request was granted, and Tuckerton Lodge #43 was given a warrant to function as a lodge. It still functions to this day, but its number has been changed to #4.

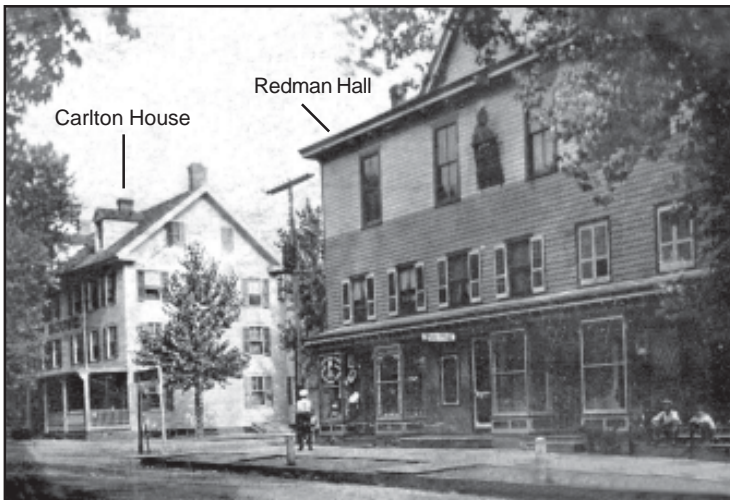
Tucker is remembered to this day as the father of Tuckerton Lodge. When the lodge was first instituted at Tuckerton, it met on the second floor of the Union Hotel on the Green Street side of the building. The lodge used that room for meetings until the death of Tucker on September 5, 1845, when the lodge moved to its present location at Wood and Church streets.

During his life time Tucker was the witness to many important events that took place in the world. He witnessed the rise and fall of many governments, kings and emperors. He followed the many events which led to the rise and fall of Napoleon Bonaparte of France. He was also a witness to the war of 1812, when America's old adversary, Great Britain, attacked our country with a vengeance. In fact, Great Britain did destroy our nation's capitol at Washington, D.C. in that war. We should all be thankful that our American forces were able to match the British in strength.

Ebenezer Tucker had the honor and distinction of serving the first eleven presidents of our country, starting with George Washington and ending with James K. Polk. In his lifetime he had seen our country change from colonies under the British monarchs to a democracy under our own elected leadership. Tucker's children were raised and educated as aristocrats. His sons, Aaron and Samuel, became successful doctors. Aaron married Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Carroll, Jr. of Maryland. She was the granddaughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Tucker lived to be eighty-eight years of age, which was an amazing feat in his time. He is remembered as an aristocratic gentleman of his time. During his time he had been a shipper, a trader, a merchant, a lumberman, and mill owner, ship builder, a patriot, a speculator and developer of land, an owner of the privateer vessel "Kitty," and a long time postmaster of Tuckerton.

Ebenezer Tucker had practiced temperance every day of his life so it is not unusual to find that he had delivered several addresses before the temperance society of Tuckerton. His last address to them was made on July 4, 1844 at the age of eighty seven. Ebenezer Tucker lived to be four score and eight years of age. He passed away on September 5, 1845. It is ironic that he, an attorney, had never drawn up a will bequeathing his belongings to his children or to anyone.



The first meetings of the Tuckerton Masonic Lodge, founded by Ebenezer Tucker, were held in the old Union Hotel which was built by Ebenezer Tucker on the southeast corner of Main Street & South Green Street. It was later expanded and remodelled to become the Carlton House. (Photo courtesy of Tuckerton Historical Society.)

We thank our guest columnist, Duke Dupuis, for his article on Ebenezer Tucker and hope that others are motivated to also send an article, story, or a Letter to the Editor.





## HOW TUCKERTON GOT ITS NAME

by Leah Blackman

*The following is an excerpt from Leah Blackman's Old Times and Other Writings, pp. 164-5, published by the Tuckerton Historical Society, Nov. 2000. It may be purchased by mail for \$22.50 + \$4.00 shipping & handling from Tuckerton Historical Society, P.O. Box 43, Tuckerton, NJ 08087. It is must reading for anyone interested in our area's history. We stongly recommend that you purchase it for your personal library.*

The following is the traditional account of the naming of Tuckerton. Ebenezer Tucker, who was sole merchant, and in point of wealth and social position the most prominent man of the place, desired to give the place a permanent name so that a Post Office might be established there. He had himself some time before named the village "Tuckerton" but many of the people of the township had prejudices and would not say or write Tuckerton, but with a great flourish would write "Clamtown" and when they spoke of the place would say "Clamtown" with a vengeful voice. Tucker in order to accomplish his laudable determination, made a feast to which he invited all the inhabitants of the township on the condition that the village should be styled Tuckerton, in honor of the giver of the banquet, and it was then and there so named by acclamation.



*The 4/3/04 photo above was taken of the sign on Rt. 9 as you enter the boro of Tuckerton from the south. Unfortunately, the attractive sign has an historical inaccuracy regarding Tuckerton's status as a Port of Entry.*

At that time Bass River was a part of Little Egg Harbor township. On the day of the feast Bass River men crowded into their wagons or mounted their horses and some individuals who could not procure a conveyance went on foot to Tuckerton for the purpose of helping to consume the eatables and assist in naming the town. In those days Bass River men had the reputation of keeping sumptuous tables and the women were noted as excellent county cooks. This being the case the people of Bass River anticipated a banquet which would be at least a first cousin to a Lord Mayor's feast. When dinner was announced the Bass River people marched in solid column to the banqueting board and made a strict scrutiny of the eatables with which it was loaded, and finding that they consisted of boiled beef and pork, potatoes, turnips, rye bread and doughnuts composed of rye flour, lard, pearl ash and West India molasses, the fastidious Bass River men quickly turned their backs on the tables crowded into the wagons or else mounted their horses, cracked their whips with energy and started for Bass River lustily hurraing for "Clamtown forever." It is said the dark complexioned doughnuts had much to do with "breaking the camels back." Ever since that time there has existed an enmity between the people of Tuckerton and those of Bass River and many a Tuckertonian and many a Bass River man have given each other black eyes or bloody noses in consequence of this ancient enmity. At this time probably few of them know the origin of their mutual hatred.

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35 Leitz Blvd. & Wisteria Lane, Tuckerton  
Opened to the public on Wednesdays from 10 AM-4 PM.*

## THIS OLD HOUSE

Sadly, we lost the **White Oak Inn**, an historic landmark on the north-east corner of Rt. 9 and East Greenbush Road, when it was demolished on September 9, 2004. Anyone having old photos, stories, or other information on the structure, please contact the Bass River Gazette, c/o The Bass River Community Library, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224. We would like to do a future story on the history of the old building if we can collect sufficient material.



The White Oak Inn, circa 1929. (Photo courtesy of Franklin W. Gray.)



The White Oak Inn a few days before its demolition on September 9, 2004.

## 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. Don't fret if your copy is a month or two late. We seem to always be busy on some history project and can't seem to get to the Gazette in a timely fashion.

## In Loving Memory

We honor the life and memory of Marian C. Broome who went home to be with the Lord on 9/17/04 at the age of 90. Marian was an invaluable historical resource for the Bass River Gazette over the years, a true friend, and a loving neighbor. She will be greatly missed.

1945  
photo



# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF EBENEZER TUCKER

by E.R. "Duke" Dupuis

To report on the life of Ebenezer Tucker is a very enjoyable assignment, as it is a very interesting journey down the trail of American history.

Reuben Tucker, Ebenezer's father, arrived at Little Egg Harbor from Orange County, New York about the year 1745. He married Ruth Sulse of Long Island who was related to the Headley family who settled at Barnegat and other places along the Jersey Shore. Shortly after his arrival to the area Reuben Tucker purchased Short Beach from Ephraim Morse, Sr. Morse was the first white man to settle on Short Beach. Reuben erected a one story structure among the sand-dunes on his island for the "health and entertainment" of pleasure seekers and invited some fishermen to share the new facilities with him. Shortly thereafter, the island became known as Tucker's Beach. It is interesting to note that the sea reclaimed Tuckers Island & Beach nearly two hundred years later, in 1927.

Ebenezer Tucker was born on Tucker's Island on November 15, 1757. The island, at the time of his birth, was known as Short Beach and was a part of Little Egg Harbor Township. Ebenezer had been born into this world as a British subject. He was born during the reign of England's King George, II. and also lived a part of his life under King George, III who reigned over the British Empire at the time of the Declaration of Independence. He had an older brother, Stephen. It is not known how much older Stephen was than Ebenezer. It is very probable that Stephen too, was born on the island. Ebenezer also had seven sisters: Margaret, Elizabeth, Sarah, Rebecca, Ruth, Julia and Nancy.

When Ebenezer was eight years of age, his father purchased property on the west side of Middle of the Shore and the family moved to the mainland. That was where Ebenezer would spend part of his next eighty years. With the coming of the summer, the Tucker family moved back to their island for the season. In the year 1765, Reuben Tucker decided to meet expenses at his seaside home by renting rooms that were not needed by his family. With the renting of rooms by the elder Tucker, his home on the island became the first seaside resort along the New Jersey coast.

Ebenezer's first wife, Catherine was the daughter of Colonel Aaron Buck of Monmouth County. Their children were Reuben, Samuel, Mary, Aaron, George Washington, Eliza and Catherine. Catherine passed away June 24, 1799 at the age of thirty seven. Shortly thereafter, on October 8, 1802, Ebenezer married Phoebe Ridgeway, the daughter of John and Suzannah Ridgeway. Of that union were to come two more Tucker children, Suzannah and Josephine. Phoebe passed away on November 5, 1808 at the very young age of twenty five. Ebenezer was then fifty years of age. He would not marry again.

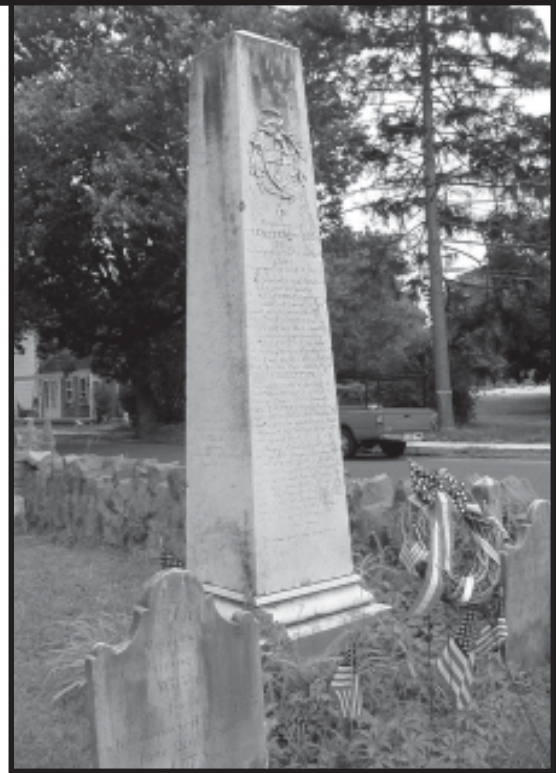
The American sailor had been very well trained in the art of smuggling and privateering. They had been forced into both ventures by the acts of Great Britain which served only to toughen their spirit during the Revolutionary War. At the start of the War for Independence we find that America had a free navy in place.. Chestnut Neck was the only privateering port in the Little Egg Harbor region, and it became a very successful port for the privateers. Ebenezer Tucker was a licensed privateer with a letter of "marque" issued by the Continental Congress to operate his vessel "Kitty." Letters of marque, to operate a vessel as a privateer, were for a very short time issued by the governors of the each state. The governor of New Jersey did not issue any of those letters. The captains from this area that requested letters of marque were informed that, in order to get their letter, it would be necessary for them to go to the Custom House in Philadelphia to make application. After a very short period of time, the Continental Congress became the sole authority for the issuing of the letters of marque.

It has long been stated that Ebenezer Tucker served in the Continental Army with General Washington at the battle of Long Island. Extensive research has been made on that claim without any documented evidence being found that he did serve. At the close of the war, Stephen Tucker, Ebenezer's older brother, a Loyalist, was forced to take refuge in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in disgrace with the new nation. He was one of many in the area who had to leave the country under the same circumstances.

Ebenezer purchased the Joseph and John Gaunt farms at Middle of the Shore at the close of the Revolutionary War. With that purchase, he became the owner of the greater part of the village. Shortly thereafter Ebenezer built the Union Hotel at the corner of the main intersection of the village. Today that would be at the southeast corner of Route 9 and South Green Street.

Ebenezer was very involved in local real estate and had vast holdings in this area as well as other parts of the state. He built a general store on the east side of the Union Hotel, in which he sold goods which he had imported from Cuba. That store also served as the office for the port of Little Egg Harbor and later as the Port of Entry. Many of us remember that store as Horner's Grocery. Tucker was a shipper and trader which enabled him to procure merchandise for his general store in Tuckerton. Most of the merchandise that he traded for came from Cuba and was paid for with lumber products from his mills. Tucker provided employment to many of the local people. He was the first business man in the area to make an attempt to move a part of the local economy from the bay to solid ground with the manufacturing of lumber products.

Records have not been found that tell us where Ebenezer received his education, or where he studied law, at which he was so successful. For his knowledge in law it is very probable that he studied and apprenticed with a law firm in Philadelphia. We do know that Ebenezer had a very successful law office



The large stone obelisk marking the burial place of Ebenezer Tucker towers over the old Tuckerton Methodist graveyard on North Green Street. Its size and stature testifies to the importance of his life and influence on the town and the surrounding area. (July, 2003 photo)



Catherine Tucker's stone sits next to her husband Ebenezer's stone in the Tucker family plot in the old Tuckerton Methodist Cemetery.

(Continued on page6)