

BASS RIVER GAZETTE

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

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THE NEW GREтна PTA MINSTRELS

by Phyllis Briggs

The New Gretna Parent Teachers Association (PTA) sponsored many fund raising activities over the years. Money raised was used to purchase Christmas gifts for the school children, prizes for the annual Halloween party, a scholarship fund, and yearly class trips. I remember trips to New York City Broadway shows, the Dupont Gardens, and the 1967 New York World's Fair.

A variety of activities helped to raise funds including candy sales, a smorgasbord dinner, and variety shows. However, without a doubt, the most successful and anticipated event was the yearly PTA Minstrel Show. My first PTA Minstrel program is dated 1962, however, old timers remind me that the Minstrels were a New Gretna tradition that date back to the 1920's. Those early shows were before my time, but I hope that the following recollections of some of the Minstrel Shows from 1962-1972 bring back fond memories of simpler times in New Gretna.



A 1966 newspaper photo shows Fred Kalm (l) and Bill Sears (r) performing in the 1966 New Gretna PTA Minstrels.

Kaufliin, Margaret McAnney, and Hazel Barnes.

The New Gretna PTA Makes Music Western Style was held on March 22nd and 23rd, 1963. Hazel Barnes was the director, Joan Brown was the pianist, Bill Sears was the Interlocutor, while Rev. John Costas and Fred Kalm were the "End Men." A thick program book filled with 106 ads produced extra money for the PTA fund. Local businesses placing the advertisements no longer exist today. They include Sears General Store, Sorocca Home Cooking Restaurant, Green's Florist, the New Gretna House, the Rustic Inn, S.D. Briggs Refrigeration, Bass River Diner, New Gretna Esso Service, and Ilse's Beauty Salon.

The Farmer Style Minstrel Show was performed on March 13th and 14th, 1964 on the New Gretna School stage. The director, pianist, Interlocutor, and End Men were the same as in 1963. The End Men, Rev. John Costa and Fred Kalm, kept the jokes flowing. Patty Fallucca and the chorus sang a lilting "Let's Take An Old Fashioned Walk," and Barbara Barnes beautiful voice sang a spirited "Hoop De Doo." Barbara's sister, Jeanette, sang "Slow Poke" with the backing of the chorus. Behind the scenes workers helped to make the show a success. The ticket committee was Betty West and Betty Petzak. Claire Wiseman and June Story used their artistic talent making minstrel posters. The stage and scenery was handled by Harold



(l-r) Jack Sears, Brina Lee Newell, Millie Potter, Unknown, and Wesley Core, Jr. perform in the 1967 Minstrel presentation, the "Roaring 20's". (Photo courtesy of Phyllis and Sam Briggs)

Sears and Walter Roberts. Lighting was operated by Carl Hogar. Millie Potter and June Story created the programs.

The Hillbilly Style Minstrel Show, directed by Claire Wiseman, was performed in 1965. The pianist was Joan Brown, Richard Smith was the "Interlocutor," with Harold Sears and Fred Kalm performing as the "End Men." Elaine Mathis sang a smooth rendition of "You Were Only Foolin'," followed by Millie Potter's "Downtown" which was well received. Janet Brown and Richard Smith sang a duet, "I Love My Baby."

The year 1966 brought us the Stars and Stripes Minstrel Show on March 25th and 26th. Claire Wiseman directed with Minnie Shropshire playing the piano. Rev. Raymond Woolbright was the Interlocutor supported by End Men Rev. Richard Scott and Fred Kalm. Rousing patriotic songs filled the room. Sarah Bourguignon's "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and Eleanor Hilbert's "There's A Star Spangled Banner Waving Somewhere" brought the house down.

The Roaring 20's Minstrel Show was a hit on April 21st and 22nd, 1967. Claire Wiseman again directed with Bonnie Allen playing the piano. Rev. Richard Scott was Interlocutor with End Men Rev. Raymond Woolbright and Fred Kalm. "Swinging On A Star" was sung nicely by Briana Lee Newell. Claire Wiseman sang out a lively "Birth of the Blues." Fred Kalm on mandolin and Wesley Core, Sr. and Norman Cramer strumming guitars performed a variety of specialty songs the crowd loved. Tickets were made by Betty Petzak with the advertising posters made by the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade children. The Program Committee included Debbie Bourguignon, Naomi Maurer, and Stephen Resch. Lighting was by Carl Hogar and Sam Briggs. The stage and scenery were crafted by Debbie Bourguignon and Claire Wiseman. The New Gretna Fire Company provided the PA system.



Country Western was the Minstrel Show theme for 1970. Directed by Claire Wiseman, it played to a full house on May 1st and 2nd. Dorothy

Norm Cramer and his sweet sounding guitar were popular with the Minstrel Show audiences. (Photo courtesy of Claire and Alston Allen)

(Cont. page 4)

YESTERYEAR'S COOKING

As a counterpoint to our recipe column we thought it would be interesting to see what cooking was like in the Little Egg Harbor area around the 1830s as discussed by Leah Blackman in her 1880s writings taken from *Leah Blackman's Old Times and Other Writings* published by the Tuckerton Historical Society. The following are excerpts from her writing entitled "Woman's Work Fifty Years Ago." You can clearly see that recipes and cooking techniques were very different than those of today. Leah saw many changes in her life time. Imagine what she would say about our "new inventions" if she were alive today .



Leah Blackman's writing give us a good picture of recipes and cooking in Little Egg Harbor in the mid 1800s. (Photo courtesy of Tuckerton Historical Society.)

Many of the old-time forms of cooking were very good. Johnny cake was a common and popular cake and if the housewife was out of bread, a Johnny cake could be quickly manufactured, and the following is the recipe for Johnny Cake: Take sifted Indian meal, water and salt and mix to a stiff batter, and then having the spider hot and well-greased, pour the batter into the spider and keep it over the coals until the batter is cooked so as not to run, then set up the spider in front of the fire and let it remain until nicely browned. And Johnny cake and butter is a dish that ought not to be rejected by anyone.

I have often heard my father (who if living would be ninety years of age) say that when he was a little boy they had a neighbor, a very poor woman, who made the best Johnny cake he ever ate. For when a little boy he would go to her house to play with her boys, and after wandering about and playing until tired and hungry, they would run to the house for something to eat, when the poor woman (who had nothing else) would give each one of them a piece of hot Johnny cake which he thought tasted better than any such cake he had ever eaten before or since. Mother said it was because he was hungry She did not like to hear him insinuate that anyone else could make better Johnny cake than she did. But hunger is an expert in giving a zest to a very plain food. When we are children we have good appetite and excellent digestive organs, and I think food tastes better to us than in after years, for I know that many kinds of food that I thought excellent when I was a child I have no liking for now.

Another article for the table was the cream apple pie, which was baked in a monster earthen dish. About a half peck of dried apples were placed on the under crust, and a little water and sweetening poured over them, and then the upper crust placed over the whole and holes pricked in it with a pair of scissors or a fork; this done, it was placed in the oven to bake, and when baked it was drawn out of the oven and the upper crust removed and broken into small pieces and mixed with the baked apples, and then a bowl of rich cream poured into the mixture, and a little fennel or dill seed added as spice, and after these ingredients were well incorporated it was spread over the under crust and the top smoothed over with a spoon. It was a luscious pie and would have been a "pretty pie, to set before the king." And when eaten with a bowl of rich milk it made an excellent and hearty supper.

In those days apples were not stewed before making pies, but were pared and then cut in thin slices and put into the pie dish which had been lined with a crust, and then a little sugar strown over the apples, and then a little water poured among the apples, and a crust spread over the top and the pie baked in a brick oven until it was thoroughly done. In those days pies, were baked in earthen dishes and by the moderate heat of a brick oven, both under and upper crust was well baked and nicely browned without

burning, and this way of making pies without cooking the apples previous to baking gives the pie a zest far preferable to stewed apple pies. Most of the above-described pies were sweetened with molasses instead of sugar, and eaten with milk for supper. Many people took a bowl of milk and cut up their allowances of pie into the milk, but others did not put the pie in the milk. Peach pie and whortle berry pie and milk are excellent eating. Farmers had plenty of lard, and doughnuts, crullers, and skein or hank and ring doughnuts were often made by the half bushel, and were excellent for those who had strong digestive apparatus.

Everything had to be cooked in a brick oven or over a wood fire in an open fireplace. Sometimes meat and fowls were roasted on a spit before the fire. The Johnny cake, short cakes and the Jersey sweet cakes were baked in a spider, which was a deep iron pan with three legs; when to be arranged for baking, a few live coals were drawn out on the hearth in front of the fire and the spider set over the coal bed: then the dough, which was about an inch thick was placed in the spider and left to bake on the under side, and when done the spider was



set up on edge in front of the forestick and fire and the cake frequently turned around in order to bake evenly. Sometimes there was a iron lid laid over the spider and coals of fire or hot ashes placed on it, and the cake baked without setting up the spider. How happy it would make me to have an old-time fireplace and a fire of seasoned oak wood and the satisfaction of making and baking in a three-legged spider another Jersey sweet cake and also a short cake. I have the iron andirons for the fireplace for the wood to rest on and also the spider, and I have not forgotten how to make the cakes nor the process of baking them, but alas! I have not a fireplace, and those things are useless without that old-fashioned fireplace. Often when fresh meat or fowl were to be roasted they were boiled in a pot and then placed in a spider to brown in the same way the cakes were baked.

An antique cast iron spider with a rounded bottom, a type that may have been used in Leah Blackman's home when she was growing up. You can see the discoloration in the feet marking where they stood in the hot coals.

Finally, tin ovens or bonnets were invented, and they were a great improvement on the three-legged spiders, and baked cake and bread and browned meat and fowl elegantly and likewise baked pies, but they were displaced by cookstoves, and old fireplaces and brick ovens pulled down or walled up, an the big pots, kettles, skillets, spiders and long-handled frying pans were thrown aside and finally sold for old iron. . . . But now old things are done away with, and new inventions have taken their places.

Leah Blackman's Old Times and Other Writings may be purchased at the Tuckerton Historical Society Museum, 35 Leitz Blvd. & Wisteria Lane, West Tuckerton. Anyone interested in Bass River and Little Egg Harbor history should have a copy in their home library. It is fascinating reading! We thank the Tuckerton Historical Society for permission to reprint the above material.

NEW GRETNA MINSTRELS

(Continued from page 1)

Higbee was the pianist with Henry Glenn featured as the Interlocutor. End Women were Eleanor Hutchins and Grace Forgach. A medley comprised of "King of the Road", "Raindrops Are Fallin' on My Head", "Cottonfields Back Home", and "Daddy Sang Bass" featured Millie Potter, Wesley Core, Sr., and Wesley Core, Jr. singing in perfect harmony.



Gladys Loveland Wilson belts out a song in the 1971 Minstrel production "Showboat". (Photo courtesy of Phyllis and Sam Briggs)

Ruth Ann Wiseman sang "Stand By Your Man" and "Ring of Fire" was delivered by Rita Bourguignon. All of the performances were enthusiastically received by the large audience.

Showboat played to an overflowing auditorium on April 23rd and 24th, 1971. Emma Tozer, PTA President, thanked the cast and Debbie Bourguignon who did the beautiful scenery. Claire Wiseman directed and Barbara Kidder played piano. Wesley Core, Jr. was Interlocutor supported by End Women Grace Forgach and Eleanor Hutchins. Comedy was provided by Gladys Wilson. "Mister Bojangles" was sung by a talented group of five- Jane Wetmore, Anne Longo, Faith

Bourguignon, David Hancock, and Larry Layton. The professionally printed program book included 60 business ads and 19 Booster names.

The 1972 Minstrel Show was a presentation of our very own Hee Haw. PTA President Marjorie Conover gave a special thank you to the cast members and to Don Mickens, Marcia Hill, Al Laemmle, and Sam Briggs for the beautiful scenery and lighting. Janet Brown and Millie Potter were co-directors with Barbara Kidder playing the piano. Wesley Core, Jr. was featured as the Interlocutor. Special guest Sam Hunt on the banjo joined with our local string players- Wesley Core, Jr., Fred Kalm, and Norman Cramer. A "Big Spender" dance was tapped by Gwen Mickens, Kathy Steinmetz, and Mary Hogan. Lynn Barnes and Norman Cramer sang the touching song, Put Your Hand In The Hand." The entire cast joined together singing the powerful finale- "Act Naturally", "Adios Farewell", "Good Luck, Goodbye" and "Everything Is Beautiful." The "New River Boys" were a featured attraction at the Saturday evening performance.



End woman Grace Forgach performs during the 1971 Minstrel production "Showboat". (Photo courtesy of Phyllis and Sam Briggs)

The New Gretna PTA Minstrels showcased local talent, dedicated townfolk, and a comradeship seldom found today. The great minstrel music will forever ring in our memories.

Program from the 1964 PTA "Farmer Style" Minstrel Show (Courtesy of Robert & Elaine Weber Mathis.)

NEW GRETNA P. T. A. MINSTREL

FARMER STYLE, 1964

Directed by Hazel Barnes	Interlocuter William Sears	Pianist Joan Brown
End Man John Costas	End Man Fred Kalm	

-- OPENING CHORUS --

THAT LUCKY OLD SUN.....	Gladys Slagle and Chorus
A FOOL NEVER LEARNS.....	Millie Potter and Chorus
LET'S TAKE AN OLD- FASHIONED WALK.....	Fatty Falluca and Chorus
TOO OLD TO CUT THE MUSTARD...	Elaine Mathis and Chorus
CATCH A FALLING STAR.....	Celina Lindsley and Jeanette Barnes
SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW...	Susie Slagle and Chorus
"WHISPERING"....	Hazel Barnes, Mildred Kauffman Evelyn Belk, Esther Potter
AROUND THE WORLD.....	Mary Catherine MacDonald and Chorus
I NEVER SLEPT MAGGIE ALONE.....	John Costas
HOW YOU GONNA KEEF 'EM DOWN ON THE FARM?.....	Claire Wiseman and Chorus
NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW.....	Bill Sears and His Guitar
HOOP DE DOO.....	Barbara Barnes
WIFEY DEAR.....	Gladys Wilson and Fred Kalm

SLOWPOKE.....	Jeanette Barnes and Chorus
SLEEPY-EYED JOHN.....	Sara Bourguignon and Chorus
MY FAVORITE THING.....	Gerri Costas
"The Harmony Twins" Fred Kalm and Norman Cramer	
BUSHEL AND A PECK.....	Carol Kauffman
THE LITTLE BEE.....	Lillian Cunningham and Chorus
I FEEL PRETTY.....	Barbara Barnes and Harold Sears
MOUNTAIN D&W.....	Norman Cramer

-- GRAND FINALE --

: :	
: COMMITTEES :	
: Tickets.....	Betty West
: Posters.....	Betty Petzak
: Lighting.....	Claire Wiseman
: Stage and Scenery....	June Story
: Programs.....	Carl Hogar
: Clean-up Committee...Volunteers, please!	Harold Sears
: SINCERE THANKS to all Committees and to:	Walter Roberts
: The Board of Education for the use of	Millie Potter, Chr.
: the school building;	June Story
: The Janitor, Mrs. Vera Sears; and	Clean-up Committee...Volunteers, please!
: The Woods Funeral Home for the chairs.	SINCERE THANKS to all Committees and to:
: Thanks to Advertisers!	: The Board of Education for the use of
: :	: the school building;
: :	: The Janitor, Mrs. Vera Sears; and
: :	: The Woods Funeral Home for the chairs.
: :	: Thanks to Advertisers!
: :	: :

1939 NEW GREтна NEWS

(Continued from page 8)



Ruy and Marietta Allen's Allentown Road (North Maple Avenue) home was threatened by the 1939 flood as the water spilled over the banks of the Bass River. (Photo courtesy of John Steinhauer.)

A Reception During a Storm. In August 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Broome held a reception "in honor of their newly married daughter Jennie who with her husband William Dillon returned from a trip thru the Southern states. Although the weather was stormy there were several of the invited guests who braved the storm to attend the reception. The dining room was decorated in white, with beautiful white lilies in a centerpiece over which hung a white wedding bell, the wedding cake was very artistically decorated surrounded by six huge candles." This item makes for poignant reading, because Jennie Broome Dillon died in 1954, at the young age of 49. Marian Broome was Jennie's older sister.

The storm mentioned on the evening of the reception was severe indeed. The front-page headline of the August 24th *Beacon* reads: "Tuckerton Suffers \$70,000 Flood Damage. Swollen Waters of Lake Pohatcong Cause Local Loss. Deluge of Last Saturday Set State All-Time Record; 6 Escape Drowning." The New Gretna column reported that the storm lasted eight hours and caused a great deal of damage to the roads and gardens in the New Gretna area. "The home of Ruy M. Allen [Presently the North Maple Avenue home of Gary & Pat Steinhauer] having the cellar foundation give way so that its occupants were forced to leave it during the night, some of Mr. Allen's neighbors assisting him in placing braces to the building so it would not collapse. Numerous boats were sunk and Cramer's Grille [Which would later become the Rustic Inn] was flooded and for a while looked like it would float away."



The 1939 storm caused a flood as Tuckerton Creek and Lake Pohatcong (right) spilled over their banks in Tuckerton (Photo courtesy of Burrell Adams.)

Community Activities. Civic and church events were an important part of life in New Gretna in those days. In October 1939, the *Beacon* announced that "the New Gretna Old Home Society will hold their regular monthly meeting in the New Gretna Civic Hall [Since remodeled into the present New Gretna Firehouse], Saturday evening October 14th instead of the 7th of October. It has been their custom to meet on the first Saturday of each month but are postponing it so that the Civic Association ladies who serve the supper may attend the New York Fair it being Daughters of Liberty Day." Also in October, "Mrs. Benjamin Broome, Mrs. Harriet P. Cramer, Mr. Clarence Post (who now goes by the name of Jim Post), Miss Margaret Adams, Miss Naomi Post [Mrs. Naomi Maurer] and father John Q. Post were among those who attended the Methodist conference Sunday." And during the same week, "the first Parent Teacher meeting was held in the form of a get-together meeting, Wednesday evening. A covered

dish dinner was enjoyed by all present and Rev. Leon Martorano was the speaker of the evening."

Fishing Trips. People here have always loved to fish, and the New Gretna columns reported on successful fishing trips. In August 1939, "Capt. and Mrs. Harry C. Mathis entertained on a fishing party Friday, Mr. and Mrs. Garfield Alloway, their son Mark and daughter Ruth of Chatsworth, Mrs. Helen VanDoren and daughter Dorothy. A fine catch of assorted fish were caught, eighty-six in number which was fine sport for the whole party." The same column reported that "Capt. Leslie Allen and party were very fortunate in the fine catch of fish which they made one day last week sailing from Chester Allen's dock and returning with four hundred and seventy fish, mostly weakfish."



(l-r): Ruy "Piper" Allen, Chet Allen, Levi Downs and Les Allen at Allen's Dock with their striper catch in 1938. The Bass River Bridge can be seen in the background (Photo courtesy of Earl & Sally Allen.)

Out-of-Town Trips. Travel by automobile was still enough of an adventure that out-of-town journeys for sightseeing or visiting relatives were frequently mentioned in the New Gretna column. For example, in October 1939, "Mr. C. G. Mathis accompanied by his niece Mrs. Mildred Kauflin left Monday for a short visit with the former's daughter and family Mrs. Leila Pitts in Schenectady, N.Y. They will return Wednesday bringing Mrs. C. G. Mathis with them." In August, "Mr. Clarence Post, Donald Grim, Miss Lily Harker and Betty Hansinger spent a delightful day motoring from New Gretna to New York, and Bear Mountain." Also in August, "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Maxwell, Mr. Alvin B. McAnney and Miss Elsie Smith attended the Boston Red Sox and Athletics game at Shibe Park, Thursday." [This item is a reminder that the Athletics, who now play in Oakland, California, were Philadelphia's American League baseball team in those days.]

Even nearby shopping trips often made the news. "Mrs. L. D. Robbins and daughter Dorothy and granddaughter Betty McAnney were Atlantic City shoppers, Tuesday." "Mrs. C. Earle Cramer and Mrs. Arthur Allen were Camden visitors, on Thursday." "Mr. and Mrs. Harry Howey and son Joseph were Friday evening visitors in Egg Harbor City."

Although much has changed in New Gretna during the past 66 years, a review of these old newspapers shows that much has remained the same. The activities, the concerns, even the names are very familiar to us who live in the area today.



Alvin McAnney accompanied Miss Elsie Smith to a Philadelphia Athletics baseball game in Philadelphia. (Photo courtesy of Peg McAnney.)

If you have some "News From The Past" that you would like to share with us, please contact me: Harry DeVerter, c/o The Bass River Gazette, P.O. Box 256, New Gretna, N.J. 08224

THE CHALKLEY CRAMER FAMILY OF BASS RIVER REVISITED

Ruth Cramer Soles' (1919-2000) story on her remembrances of her girlhood visits to her grandparents, Chalkley & Carrie Cramer, home and General Store in New Gretna appeared in the last issue of the Gazette. This is a postscript to that story as told by Ruth from information given to her by her sister-in-law, Jane Newbury Cramer, in 1992. Jane was the wife of Ruth's brother, John Emery Cramer.

Jane says that Aunt Theora told her that at the age of 16 she rode her bike to Atlantic City bank - a long ride and she had no problems. But what made it remarkable was she had 5,000 gold coins strapped to her bike!!! She did this for her grandmother.



Bess (l) and Theora on vacation in 1946. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

My father's people were very gentle and good people. I can't remember them ever saying anything about anyone that wasn't good. My grandfather Chalkley had a mustache and a goatee and was very distinguished and my grandmother Carrie was a fine looking woman. Aunt Theora was tall and thin and was always rushing here and there. Aunt Bess was on the plump side and was a great cook. Her macaroni and cheese and her banana cake with boiled icing were great. She was always going on a diet and when they would come to Trenton to have dinner with us, she would always

say that she would start tomorrow.

Grandmother Cramer was a teacher, Sunday school teacher, and a piano teacher. She was known as Aunt Carrie to everyone in town. Also, either my great-grandmother or my great great grandmother was murdered. She was ill and the whole family went to church and left her at home with the money box under the bed. Someone stole the money and pounded her comb into her head killing her.

My grandfather [Chalkley Cramer] wanted my father [John Emery Cramer] to move back to New Gretna and take over the store for him, and he did not want to do that. Aunt Theora said that broke my grandfather's heart and she blamed my father for Grandpa's death. I wish I had been smart enough to have a recorder going whenever



Jack Mathis was a patriot as well as a great story teller. He served in the U.S. Coast Guard during WWII and participated in the Normandy invasion. He was awarded the Silver Star Lifesaving Medal for rescuing an officer at sea. (Photo courtesy of Marian C. Broome.)

Aunt Theora talked about the family as I am sure I am forgetting a lot. I often wonder what our lives would have been like if he had done what Grandpa wanted him to do.

My cousin, Jack Mathis, told me that Grandpa cut and sold salt hay for a living before he opened the general store. Grandpa lived on Dans Island out in the Barnegat Bay and had to row over to the mainland whenever he wanted to see my grandmother. I was told that on the day that the blizzard of 1888 started, they were out on the island visiting and had a hard time getting home.

Jack told me that when they followed the ambulance that was taking Aunt Theora to Southern Ocean County Hospital, he started to laugh when he thought about what was going to happen when the nurses tried to take out her teeth . . . at 93, she still had her own teeth!

When I went to work at the Southern Ocean State Bank, Jack Parsons, director, said that when he went to school he always could tell which kids came from New Gretna because they had a different way of speaking - almost a southern drawl. I know some of them do, but I do not remember my grandparents and their children speaking that way.

When I left Bank of Mid Jersey in 1976, I went to work at a new bank in Tuckerton, and I helped to open it. When we finally were ready to open in about a week or so, three people came to open accounts. The parking lot was not yet finished and the door was locked, but they knocked on the door and Mr. Angle, my boss, let them in. He decided I should be the one to take care of them. A very old lady (she was about 90 at the time) sat down at my desk and told me she was Georgie Lutz. Somewhere in my brain this rang a bell, and I told her that her name was familiar to me. She asked who I was, and I told her I was Emery Cramer's daughter. She told me that she had been a visitor at our home in Trenton many times. I couldn't get over that - to think that my first customer would turn out to be someone out of our family's past! She must have made a deep impression on me when I was little and she was at our house.



Georgie Cramer Lutz at age 96. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

NEW GREटना HOUSE GONE

We lost another old town landmark when the New Gretna House was destroyed by a fire late on Mischief Night, October 31, 2004. Anyone having old photos, advertising items, menus, stories, or other information involving the New Gretna House, please contact us. We will be doing a feature article on the history of the New Gretna House in our next Gazette edition.



The remains of the New Gretna House the morning after the fire.



Betty Lamson West, great niece of Joe B. Lamson who built the New Gretna House around 1884, stands beside the ruins of the old hotel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bass River Gazette,

Got your latest New Gretna Gazette [Issue 16: Jan-June, 2004]. It was a real good one. Chaukley Cramer was quite an icon in old New Gretna, as I remember my parents and grandparents always talking about him. He was known as a pretty shrewd character, as he made a lot of money for the times he lived in. He was known as a sharp business person. The old timers told the story which they all said was true. He had a big old round pot bellied stove in the middle of his store which attracted a lot of hanger ons who would flock in on cold days. They would gather around the stove to keep warm, not spending any money, and just soaking up heat, so he painted the stove red like it was giving out a lot of heat. They would gather around and rub their hands like they were warming up until, eventually, they begin to notice that no heat was coming out of it, so they left. That's how he got rid of his nonpaying undesirable customers.



My birth certificate is signed by him so I have his signature. I was born in Oct 30 1927 and I know he died shortly thereafter. Of course I don't remember him but I do remember his daughter Theora as mom would send me there to get some little thing that no other store would have like a certain kind of thread etc. Theora always had what you would want. When a customer would open the front door to the store to go in one would trip a little bell attached to a string that would alert Theora that someone was in the store, and she would immediately appear.

Theora ran the Cramer family General Store on New York Road (Rt. 9) in New Gretna after the death of her father, Chalkley in 1927. (Photo courtesy of Ruth Cramer Soles.)

I remember Chalkley's widow as she was an old lady with high button up shoes. Her daughter, Bessie, would bring her to church every Sunday to First Presbyterian, and we would have to always sing the "Old Rugged Cross" as it was her favorite hymn.

Another little tidbit about Chaukley. My father, Curtis Maxwell, said when he was about 12 yrs old, which would have been in or about 1910, his father, John Henry, took violently ill in the middle of the night John Henry had stepped on a nail and put it almost thru his foot the day before, and it pained him unmercifully. My dad had to ride his bicycle all the way from Wading River to New Gretna in the middle of the night to call for old doc Myrtle Frank in Egg Harbor to

come to Wading River to attend his father as Doc Frank was the family physician for the whole Wading River, Green Bank, Lower Bank and Egg Harbor area. So he pedaled his bicycle thru the old sandy road. There was no paved road from Wading River to New Gretna at that time, just sand and soft at that.



The only phone in town then that he knew of was Chaukley Cramer's. He had to wake them up around 2:30 in the A.M. to use the phone. In those days what few people that had a phone lent it out to anyone who needed it in an emergency. Chaukley who was in business at that time had the phone installed for business, and his own personal use and just about anyone else who needed it. In turn, one was supposed to repay in like kind and patronize his establishment which they did. My dad said one could buy most anything there in the dry goods line and most anything else, and if Chalkley didn't have it, he would order it for you. He always carried any kind of gear that the baymen used as there was a lot of them back then.

Donald's father, Curtis Maxwell, told him stories about old time New Gretna and Chalkley Cramer. (Photo courtesy of Donald Maxwell.)

Old Doc Frank hitched up in one horse buggy and drove out that very morning, all the way from Egg Harbor, as soon as he hung up from the phone and attended to my grandfather who incidentally lived to the ripe old age of 94.

Don Maxwell (9/29/2004)

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

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.

CORRECTION FROM JUNE, 2004 ISSUE

The following photo misprinted on page 3 of the June, 2004 issue of the *Bass River Gazette*.



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.)

NEWS FROM THE PAST- Edited by Harry DeVerter

Old newspapers are a good source for understanding what life was really like in the "good old days." That's why we try to include "News From The Past" in most issues of the Gazette. We thank Brian Dietrick for his article on "1939 News From New Gretna" which mentions many names of friends, relatives, and loved ones. We hope that you enjoy it as much as we have. [Harry DeVerter]

1939 NEWS FROM NEW GREтна

by Brian Detrick

In my work as one of the volunteer curators at Tuckerton Seaport, I came across several portions of the *Tuckerton Beacon* newspaper, from 1939 and 1940. They were donated to the Seaport by Betty Shinn and Margaret Holman. Two of the newspapers, dated August 24 and October 5, 1939, are complete copies, and they include columns reporting on the social news from New Gretna. These columns provide a fascinating snapshot of life in New Gretna in 1939.

The October 5th newspaper was the *Beacon's* 50th Anniversary Edition, and it gave special recognition to its community correspondents. These included Sarah Mathis, who had been reporting on New Gretna news for the previous two years. The *Beacon* said, "An active social and community worker Mrs. Mathis is a member of the New Gretna Daughters of Liberty, the Tuckerton Chapter No. 54, O.E.S. [Order of the Eastern Star], the New Gretna Civic Club and the New Gretna Parent-Teachers' Association. Mrs. Mathis, who is engaged in the insurance business, resides on Main Street, in New Gretna." Howard Ware remembers that in addition to being an insurance agent, Sarah Mathis was also a notary public and wrote deeds.



Sarah Mathis was a successful business-woman in New Gretna. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger)

The Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. Church news was prominent in the New Gretna columns. The Presbyterian church was in a time of transition, and the October

5th edition noted that "a farewell party was tendered to the Rev. and Mrs. William Bulloch at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cramer by members of the Drucilla class of which Rev. Bulloch has been a teacher for the past three years . . . A beautiful set of book-ends were presented to him by the class as a token of remembrance for having been such a faithful teacher and the class regrets very much to have Rev. Bulloch and his wife leave our community as do members of the congregation and wish for them continued health and success wherever they may locate. The evening was enjoyed by playing games after which refreshments were served and enjoyed by members present which were: President of the Class, Mrs.



Rev. Leon Martorano, while a U.S. Army Chaplain, and his wife, Concetta. (Photo courtesy of Naomi Maurer)

Mrs. Henry Updike, Mrs. Alberta Cramer, Mrs. Elizabeth Gerew, Mrs. William Reynolds, Mrs. Walter O'Neil, Mrs. Alice Mathis, her mother Mrs. Joseph Shropshire, Mrs. Leola Hickman, Mrs. Louis Maison, Mrs. Clara Decker, Mrs. Jas. Updike, Mrs. Arnold Cramer, Mrs. Edith Loveland, Mrs. Ida Vincent, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Cramer and Rev. and Mrs. Bulloch." Evidently a new permanent pastor had not yet arrived, because guest speakers were preaching at the Presbyterian church in both August and October.

There was no change of pastors at the Methodist church in 1939. "The Rev.

Leon Martorano has been returned to the pastorate of the Methodist Church for another year. We are glad to welcome he and his family back with us and wish for him, success.



During the week of August 24, at the Presbyterian church, "the regular weekly meeting of the Drucilla Class was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Gerew, Thursday evening." Meanwhile, at the Methodist church, "the Concetta Bible class will meet on Tuesday evening at the home of Mrs. Robert Maxwell." My mother, Marguerite Detrick, recalls that the "Drucilla Class" was named for the Presbyterian minister's wife. Later, when the Methodist church was looking for a name for its Bible class, they followed the Presbyterians' example and named it the "Concetta Class," for the Methodist minister's wife, Mrs. Concetta Martorano.

Harold & Elizabeth Gerew opened their home for the Presbyterian Church Drucilla Class meetings. (Photo courtesy of Harold Gerew, Jr.)

Perfect Attendance at School: The October 5th edition reported the children with perfect attendance records at the New Gretna School in the previous month. Some familiar New Gretna names are included.



Donald Maxwell had a perfect school attendance year in 1939. (Photo courtesy of Donald Maxwell)

Perfect attendance record for grades 6, 7 and 8 for the month of September are: Lewis Allen, David Kalm, Donald Maxwell, Jack Meier, Harold Sears, Hattie Baker, Helen Bozarth, Doris Dupont, Rita Dupont, Margaret Elberson [now Mrs. Peg Groff, Hannah Griffin, Betty Lamson (Mrs. Betty West)], Doris Loveland, Gladys Loveland, Lillian Martorano, Velma McAnney, Lois Mizelle, Betty Thoran, Oletta Thoran, Catherine Wiseman, Miss Elsie Smith, teacher.

Grades 3, 4 and 5: Alston Allen, Samuel Briggs, Howard Cramer, Jimmy Cramer, Norman Cramer,

Wallace Dupont, Nicholas H. Hank, Fred Hoffman, Fred Kahn, Aaron Mathis, Cecil Mathis, Carlisle McAnney, Billy Sears, Betty Elberson [Mrs. Betty Petzak], Madeline Lenhardt, Jean Martorano, June Martorano [yes, two of the preacher's daughters were twins!], Georgine Mathis, Betty McAnney, Peggy Reynolds, Betty Shutte. Mrs. Leola Hickman, teacher.

1st and 2nd grades: James Mains, Richard Dupont, Stephen Eichinger, Lewis Mathis, Geo. Mathis, Joseph Shropshire, Lora Jean Hickman, Inga Hoffman, Suzanne E. Stanford. Miss Margaret Adams, teacher.



Little Stevie Eichinger had perfect attendance as a 1939 first grader. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger)

(Continued on page 5)