

BASS RIVER GAZETTE

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

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THE JUDGE WILLIAM COLLINS FRENCH FAMILY

written by Genevieve Adeline French Bennet in 1975

My father, the late William Collins French, was born on July 30th, 1870 in Bass River (or New Gretna) Burlington County, New Jersey. He died Feb 25th 1930 at his home in Collingswood, N.J. He married my mother, the former Adeline Laurence Pinyard of 529 Penn St. Camden, N.J. in 1903 (Dec. 2). She died on Oct. 28th 1918 at their Swan Bay Farm, Port Republic, N.J.

My mother was educated in Raymond Academy on Penn St., Camden. She was French descent. Her parents were Abigail Goodwin and Theodore William Pinyard. I have known only my grandmother Pinyard and my mother's brother and family, Mary and Theodore Pinyard and their daughter, Leah. Aunt Mary and Uncle Dory were dear people. My sister and brothers and I missed them very much when they were gone. They died in the sixties and I have not seen my cousin Leah since. They lived in Long Island. Uncle Dory was with the Pennsylvania Railroad all his life until retirement. For many years they were in Chicago, living in La Grange, Ill. My mother was noted for her beauty. She had a lovely singing voice and played the piano by note and "by ear." She loved children and a large family.



William Nelson French (1842-1889), Judge French's father. (Photo courtesy of Wm. Collins French III via Sandy Johnson.)

My father's family is a different story. In South Jersey he had many relatives and I have cousins I do not know and others who are even now coming to be known as such. On my father's maternal side he was descended from Dr. Richard Collins, Surgeon General in the Revolutionary War and the first resident physician in the area of Atl. Co. He was descended from the progenitors of the famous Lake Family. His ancestors on his mother's side included the Clark family of Clark's Landing. His great grandfather was Thomas Clark, Revolutionary soldier, and my ancestor for joining the Daughters of the American Revolution. I chose him because he was the closest in years.

On my father's paternal side he was descended from Thomas French who came from England on one of Wm. Penn's ships. His history and others above mentioned are in this folder in genealogies. Other ancestors on my father's paternal side were the Great John Mathis of Tuckerton; John Leek of Wading River; and Micajah Smith of Port Republic, Privateer during the Revolution, giver of the first Methodist Church in Port Republic, freeholder and hero.

My father was the eldest living son of Mary Caroline Collins French and William Nelson French. Ina and Courtland preceeded him but died when babies. He was born in the home of his grandfather, Capt. Will French, a widower. William Nelson sailed his father's boats and while he was away his family stayed with his father until their five children were born. While the children were quite young they moved to Port Republic and lived at the "Blake Place" which was near the large farm of my father's grand father, John Collins. Later they moved to Atlantic City where my grandfather, Capt. Wm. French, had a fish market.

Right here I will mention two amusing tales my father used to tell about their days in Atlantic City. He was addicted to "dime novels" but his parents disapproved. He had them hidden in the overhead part of the fish market. His sister, Tillie

(real name Alice Matilda for her mother's sister Alice Collins Cake and her father's sister Matilda French Ballinger). Tillie found the novels and told her father about them. This put my father (Fritz as he was nicknamed then) on the spot. My father delivered fish to customers and I imagine went along the streets selling them. When the poor horse was not engaged in this activity he rode her bareback on the sand lots of the present Chelsea, enacting the cowboy and Indian escapades from the "dime novels". For this he was severely reprimanded by his father.

Times changed, though, and the family moved to Camden. My grandfather became engaged in canning terrapin soup. These were the days when a Mr. Dorrance was beginning what turned out to be Campbell's Soup Co. I have heard it said that he and my grandfather once talked of joining together. My grandfather traveled as far south as North Carolina buying terrapin. He died at the age of 46 and my father, at 19, became the head of the family. He under took to continue the terrapin canning but it failed. He became involved in a coal and ice business, studying law on the side.

The youngest of my father's family was his brother, Samuel Jones Tilden French. He was about 9 years younger than my father. My father had little time for a social life. He spent most of his evenings studying. One evening Uncle Sam brought "his girl", Adeline Pinyard home after a trolley ride. He had bought her candy and she offered some to my father who ate them all while studying. He told Uncle Sam that Adeline was too much



Judge William Collins French was born in his grandfather William French's house on No. Maple Ave., Bass River, now owned by Harry and Joyce DeVerter. (1983 photo courtesy of Sara Mathis Guertler.)



Mary Collins French (1839-1923), Judge French's mother. (Photo courtesy of Wm. Collins French III via Sandy Johnson.)



Caroline and William Nelson French's children- (l-r) Alice Matilda, Emma Belle & William Collins. (Photo courtesy of Wm. Collins French III via Sandy Johnson.)

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LIFE WITH GRANDPOP LOVELAND

by Kenneth M. Mick, Sr.

The Sailor Suit

"Here comes your grandpop," one of my friends warned. Sure enough. And he was moving fast. He spied me playing with my friends in front of the Presbyterian Church building. In 1945 a row of hedges separated the church yard from the road. Quickly, I ducked behind the hedges, as if Grandpop didn't see me.



Irene Cobb Loveland (1881-1944) with grandson, Ken Mick. (Photo courtesy of Ken Mick, Sr.)



Ken Mick, age 6 1/2, and his sister, Barbara, age 4, in grandpop Arthur's back yard. Note the boat lumber stacked up against the garage. (Photo courtesy of Ken Mick, Sr.)

"Where's Kenny?" he questioned. Silent shrugs responded. Next thing I know, Grandpop was leaning over the hedges, with his glaring eyes piercing down at me. "Didn't your mother tell you not to play in that sailor suit?" he bellowed. I knew what was coming next, so I bolted around the church building. Then as fast as my six year old legs would travel, I darted down the lane leading into the woods.

Grandpop moved like greased lightning. Wow! Could those 69 year old legs run. I didn't get far. And within minutes the willow switch motivated me never to play in my sailor suit again.

Boat Builder

His grave stone reads, 'Boat Builder'. That he was. The best of the best in my opinion. As far as I know, he was the first in the county to build a garvey with a v-shaped bottom. During most of his career, he used a hand saw. He told me once, "I've cut enough board to saw from here to New York City and back." I can still see him shaping those cedar planks into some of the best garveys around.



Arthur Loveland built boats in the backyard of his North Maple Avenue home, diagonally across the street from the New Gretna School. It looks much different today, as a second story has been added. (Photo courtesy of Sara Mathis Guertler.)



Arthur "Cooney" Loveland with grandson, Ken Mick, inspect another garvey built in Arthur's backyard. (Photo courtesy of Ken Mick, Sr.)

The trip to the B a s s River for launching was especially exciting. Jack up the garvey. Roll the iron wheel wagon under. Lower the garvey into a secured position. Hook up to the car. Off to the river. The noisy wagon wheels announcing our coming. You could walk as fast as the wagon was moving. But we kids would ride our bikes along side, having the time of our lives. Down the lane through Millers cemetery. Out onto route 9. Down to the bridge to the launching ramp nearby. Slowly back the garvey down the ramp. It floats!

Muskrat Trapper

Grandpop walked almost everywhere, including the miles down to his 600 acres of three-edged sawgrass and mud, the meadows. Taking

the lane along side of Clarence Mathis' food store, we then passed a few houses, and cut off into the woods. Walking through the woods parallel to route 9, we eventually crossed Amasa Landing Road. Then into more woods, and shortly coming out to route 9 by an old cranberry bog. Crossing over 9 and into the woods again, we finally arrived at the edge of the meadows. Walking around the meadows in December was cold. Bitterly cold. The winter wind blasting in our faces made us feel like icebergs.



Uncle Bert (1913-1987), Grandpop Loveland's oldest son, following family tradition, trapped the local meadows and also built boats. (Photo courtesy of the William Augustine Collection, Rutgers University.)

Grandpop set out mostly box traps. Also, traveling by rowboat along the banks of a creek we called the Roundabout, he strategically positions a few steel traps. When we came upon an occupied trap, usually we found one rat. But sometimes we were happy to see two or three in a trap. And it was always a delight to hear him shout, "It's a black!"

Not only did he teach me how and where to step in the meadows to avoid sinking up to the knees in mud, he also taught me what burlap sacks were really for... carrying muskrats! The long trek home was much slower, under the burden of carrying twelve to fifteen rats each. Finally at home, off came the boots. Feet firmly positioned up against the old coal stove in the dining room. Thawed out at last.

The Last Letter

The last letter I received from Grandpop Loveland arrived about three months before he departed this earth.

New Gretna NJ Oct. 14, 1956

Mr. Kenneth Mick

Dear Grandson,

Will now answer your letter. Glad to hear that you have a good room mate. Glad to hear that you are enjoying good health. Just got letter from your mother. The folks are OK. Irene is doing fine. Arthur gets down weekends. Old Bootsie had 5 more kittens. I feel pretty good. I think I will be able to trap. Haven't been down to get my fishing poles. I have some of those perch we caught yet. Thelma had to go to Atlantic City Hospital, but is home and is coming along fine. I got 30 watermelons picked and put away for later. Duty was in and got some grapes once. Do you think you will be here for Christmas and do some trappin? Bow and arrow deer season came in Oct. 12. Haven't heard of any body killing any. We will soon be having a birthday. This is about all I can think of now. So will close with love.

From you granddad, Arthur T. Loveland

The Last Moments

January 1957, at age 81, Grandpop Loveland lay in a hospital bed in a coma. Recovery was not expected. My Mom sat quietly at his bedside. Our prime concern was that he had never repented and believed in Jesus, though he had heard the gospel from several people.

About two years before he fell into a coma, I had become a true disciple of Jesus, and wanted Grandpop to follow Jesus also. I recall one evening, as he was relaxing in his favorite overstuffed chair, I was sitting on the living room floor in front of him. Reminding him of the grace of God in Christ, I encouraged him to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus. He wasn't hostile or sarcastic. Just sat there silently saying "No."

Now he was in a coma. Not expected to live. Suddenly his eyes opened. He was conscious for several minutes. My Mom reminded

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LIFE WITH GRANDPOP LOVELAND

(Continued from page 2)

him of the grace and mercy of our Creator-Redeemer. Appealed to him to believe and call on the Lord for salvation from sin. And Grandpop did. Then he slipped back into a coma and died soon after. God is so merciful.

"But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:4 & 5.



Arthur T. Loveland's brief epitaph "Boat Builder" speaks volumes about his life and influence in the community. (Photo by Pete Stemmer.)



Ken Mick with his grandfather, Arthur Loveland, in New Gretna. (Photo courtesy of Ken Mick, Sr.)

We thank Ken Mick for his story about his grandfather, Arthur Loveland, and we encourage other "Bass River Gazette" readers with roots in New Gretna to jot down a story or a few remembrances and send them to us so that we may share them with our readers.

ARTHUR LOVELAND FAMILY INFORMATION

from "The Descendants of William Cranmer of Elizabethtown, NJ"
by Jean and Murray Harris

Arthur T. Loveland, son of William Towers and Mary Elizabeth (Hickman) Loveland, born 20 November 1875 at New Gretna, died 25 January 1957, residence New Gretna, married Irene S. Cobb, daughter of Jonathan M. and Lenora (Patterson) Cobb, born 1 October 1881, died 14 October 1944. Their children:

- (1) John Bertram Loveland, born about 1913
- (2) Myra Loveland, born 1916
- (3) Lenora Loveland, born 4 July 1920, married Clarence Mick [Ken Mick's parents].
- (4) Erma H. Loveland, born 7 October 1915, died 1 August 1918, buried Miller Cemetery.
- (5) Arthur Thomas Loveland Jr, born 25 September 1924, died 28 October 1992, buried Miller Cemetery, New Gretna, married 17 July 1948 Eleanor Downs, daughter of Winfield and Elizabeth (Bernhardt) Downs, born 2 April 1930 at Wading River.
- (6) Irene Loveland, born 30 April 1926, died 10 April 1992, buried Miller Cemetery.

WHO WE ARE

The *Bass River Gazette* staff are Harry DeVerter, Steve Eichinger, Jean & Murray Harris, Elaine Mathis, 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.

Check out our "Bass River History" Web Site at:
<http://bassriver-nj.org/history>

You'll find all the back issues of the "Bass River Gazette" there, along with a lot of Bass River related history.

NEWS FROM THE PAST

February 19, 1948

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Sympathy is extended to Mr. Louis Maison in the loss of his wife. Mrs. Jane Yike and Mr. Ralph Maxwell called on Mrs. **Mabel Sooy** Sunday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Potter and Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Kershaw of Lakehurst, spent the week end with Mrs. **Mabel Sooy**.

Those who welcomed Mrs. Sara Mathis home from Philadelphia Hospital on Sunday were Mrs. Sophie Sears and Mr. Forrest Trewin of Bridgeton and Messrs Ralph Maxwell of Pleasantville, Raymond Jones of Tuckerton and Mrs. Jane Yike.

Mrs. Arthur Inman is spending a week in Paterson, N. J.

Mrs. Edward Orvaski is spending a few days in New York City.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Earl Cramer entertained Saturday evening Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Mathis, the Rev, and Mrs. Champion B. Goldy, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Gerew, and Mrs. Helen Mathis.

Mr. C. G. Mathis arrived home from Florida on Tuesday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Mathis and Mr. and Mrs. **Harry V. Mathis** spent part of Friday in Absecon.

Sunday callers of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Storey were Mr. and Mrs. James R. Hunter and Mr. and Mrs. Matt Wagner of Haddon Heights.

Miss Elsie Smith and Mrs. A. Spaeth and son Albert spent Monday in Atlantic City.

Miss **Elsie Smith**, Mrs Oscar Pflaum, Mrs. Richard Storey, Mrs. Agnes Spaeth, and son Albert and Mrs. Alvin



Sally Corlis Mathis-**Mrs. Harry V. Mathis**. (Photo courtesy of Donald Maxwell.)

McAnney were PTA visitors at the Green Bank Founder's Day Program on Monday evening which was enjoyed by all.



Elsie Smith was a teacher at the New Gretna School for many years. (Photo courtesy of Stephen Eichinger)

Methodist Church Notes

Sunday, February 22. Layman's Day. The four Church School Superintendents will speak in each church on the Parish. The general theme will be "Learning to Live the Christian Life." Mr. **Franklin Gray** will represent New Gretna, Mr. David Cavileer will represent Lower Bank, Miss Augusta Weeks will represent Green Bank and Mrs. Inez Siefert will represent Weekstown.



Franklin Gray in 1952. He was known around town as simply "FA". (Photo courtesy of Franklin W. Gray, F.A.'s son)

BECOME A GAZETTE REPORTER !

We encourage anyone out there who has memories of New Gretna to send us a story, some jotted down remembrances, or photos with some comments. We would be happy to fit them into a future edition of the *Gazette*. If you would like to do research on some area related to New Gretna, please contact us and we'll help you get started on a story.

JUDGE WILLIAM COLLINS FRENCH

(Continued from page 1)

"girl" for him and took her home. They were married as I have said at the beginning. My father was 34 and my mother 25 yrs. of age. I was born a year later.



William Collins French (1870-1930), "The Judge", married Adeline Pinnyard (1882-1918) and established their home in Camden. (Photo courtesy of Wm. Collins French III via Sandy Johnson)

After their marriage my father and mother started their home at 212 So. 5th St., Camden. This had been my grandmother's home but my father arranged for her to move to a home in Port Republic with her daughters, Emma Belle and Bessie Virginia. The house was two doors from the Church. His eldest sister, Alice Matilda, was a trained nurse (RN), and the 3rd floor front room at 212 was reserved for her when not on a case. She inherited from her Aunt Georgia Clark, eventually, a home in Gibbsboro, N.J. where she was the post mistress until she passed away.



(l-r) Judge French clowning around with his son-in-laws, E. Clinton Johnson and Uzz Adams, at the Chestnut Neck farm in 1920. (Photo courtesy of Steve Eichinger.)

spending them with Aunt Belle, Uncle Sam and our family. I loved her very much and used to appreciate the privilege of sleeping with her. I was impressed by the length of time she spent on her knees in prayer every night.

While my grandmother loved the house on Main St., Port Republic, my father and mother and their family spent some time in the summer with her. My father would commute for his law practice in Camden on the train from Absecon. My mother often went to meet him in Absecon,



The French house on Main Street in Port Republic. (Photo courtesy of Port Republic 2000 Booklet)

driving our horse and buggy. At that time my father had definite ideas about not having an automobile. I was about 3 years old and would go along. My brother, Bill, was the baby at that time. He was William Collins French Jr., born 1906. I was born 1904. Then came Theodore Tilden French, named after my mother's brother, Theodore W. Pinnyard, Uncle

"Dory" to us, "Tea" to his wife, Aunt Mary, and "Tilden" for Uncle Sam's middle name, leaving Samuel for his son to come. Caroline Elizabeth, born 1910, was named after my father's mother and a favorite Aunt of his, Aunt Lib of Berlin. Florence Howard was born in 1912, named for mother's sister who died while still a child, and a close friend of my father, Howard Miller. Woodrow Wilson French was born in 1914. He was named for President Wilson for whom my father had campaigned when he



became Governor of New Jersey and for him, also, in the Presidential election. He and Uncle Sam were part of a delegation that went to Washington for the Inauguration. Pres. Wilson sent my brother "Woody" a silver cup inscribed with his name, date, etc.. My father was appointed Judge of the District Court by Governor Wilson. In this judgeship he was permitted to continue his law practice.

In about 1908 "Judge French" (as he was called by everyone, including my husband who called him "Judge") purchased a 1200 acre farm at Chestnut Neck from the heirs of his maternal grandfather, John Collins. The farm had been known as a plantation for many years. It was owned by the Great John Mathis, who owned most of the land along both sides of the Mullica River. His home was in Bass River. From the Great John the land from Chestnut Neck up to the plantation belonged to his grandson, also a John Mathis who is buried at Chestnut Neck on land near where his homestead used to stand. He left the plantation to a son and from that time it changed owners several times. Micajah Smith retired to this plantation leaving his place up at the Mill Dam on Nacote Creek to his son-in-law, Daniel Mathis and his daughter, Phoebe. The plantation was owned by Lippincotts and thence to John Collins.



The French farm at Chestnut Neck had a sizable house that was suitable for the large, active family. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)

It is interesting to note that through Daniel and Phoebe Mathis my father was descended from the Great John Mathis and Micajah Smith. My father's paternal grandmother was the daughter of Daniel and Phoebe. Her maternal grandfather was Micajah Smith and her paternal great grandfather was the Great John Mathis. She was Phoebe Mathis French, having married Capt. William French of Bass River. Her mother's name was Phoebe Smith Mathis. So it was good for Judge French to own the Farm which had belonged to his ancestors from the time before the Revolutionary War.

After my father passed away we, his children from 16 to 26 yrs of age were unable to keep the farm and sold it to the State of New Jersey for a Game Reserve. By that time my father had 2000 acres having added to the original, the Sooy Place which we sold to Clem Giberson, the Rose Place which we sold to Dr. E. Elmore Ness and the Fort Hill property

JUDGE WILLIAM COLLINS FRENCH

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that we sold to Ransford J. Abbott. My husband and I had lived at the farm from the time we were married. The family came down all week-end during the winter as well as summer after that. After "Fod" as we called him passed away we, my husband and I undertook to run the farm but it was depression time and the products were worth small amounts.

My mother had died at the farm in 1918. Woody was 4 yrs. old and I was 14. The others coming in between all 2 years apart. My father never remarried. We had house-keepers. The main one being Alice Adams from Wading River.

We had everything at the farm. Cows, horses, pigs, sheep, turkeys, chickens, ducks, guineas, geese, cats, dogs, etc. We had a dairy and thorough-bred holstein cows and a bull named Prince Decoll Jr. We had orchards of apples, peaches, pears, plums and fields of corn and a garden of vegetables for the table. The farm had meadows for 3 miles along the Mullica River with creeks named Fish Creek, Noah's Creek and Scow Ditch running almost up to the buildings from the river. The buildings included an ice house, potato or apple house, wagon house, pump house, tool house, old barn and new barn containing the latest style milking machine and there was also a silo and a water tank. Until about 1922 we generated our own electricity.



(l-r) Caroline, Genevieve and Florence French had so much fun on the farm during the summer, they hated going back to Camden for school. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)

more. Our cousins, Uncle Sam's sons, were the age of Bill and Ted and they were a foursome. I had lots of company down for weekends- friends from Camden Friends School and Friends Central in Phil. My second cousins Ada and Marjorie Thomas from Pleasantville were a great delight to me. I thought they were fabulous. They were out-going and I was quite bashful as a young person.

My father got over his aversion to automobiles and decided to have a car. Our first was a Packard sold to him by one Tod Middleton. The Packard



Alice Adams from Wading River was a treasured housekeeper at the Judge's Port Republic farm. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)

and new barn containing the latest style milking machine and there was also a silo and a water tank. Until about 1922 we generated our own electricity.

My specialty was ducks and later a pony too. I would not allow any of the ducks to be eaten. I spent most of my time with these activities until about 16 yrs. Old. In my later years I have turned to dogs and birds.

We had so much fun down on the farm. We hated it when we went back to Camden for school. We had our own little community and so much company. Twenty was the usual amount for dinner and often

was always having tire troubles and other ailments so Tod M. sold him a red Chadwick. This was better but my father, Fod, attended an automobile show in Detroit, I believe it was, and purchased a gray Oakland with matching leather upholstery. Brand new and a show car I think our next was a Rio and we had a Mitchell and a Winton limousine and a number of twin-six Packards of different colors. At one time we had 2 at a time. Then my father had Studebakers and that was the car he had when he died.

I thought the world had come to an end when my father died and I was inconsolable. After my mother died my father was both father and mother to his children.

I keep returning to the farm, remembering events that happened there. Therefore, things are not written as they took place or in a consecutive manner.

William and Adelaide French moved into the new Farm House as a summer home about 1913. My grandfather's (John Collins) home had burned to the ground a year before. My father was on the train in route to his Camden office when a porter came through the train announcing the fact that the French Farm House at Chestnut Neck had been destroyed by fire.

All of the children were born by that time except Woody and I was 8 yrs. old. The boys, Bill and Ted, were playing outside and shouting fire, fire! I told them to stop saying that and then looked at the house and saw smoke on the roof. I ran down to the field and called Tommy A. York and Clinton Johnson who were working with a team of horses named Bud and Ted after the boys.



The team of horses were named Bud and Ted after the boys. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)

The men raced up to the house but were unable to save it. It was after that tragedy that our parents built a new house. It was quite large with a wide porch extending along the north and west side of the house, on first and second floors. There was a first floor porch on the back and south side of the house, also, with a veranda over it on the second floor. Upstairs had a wide hallway running from west to east, opening on the porch at one end and the veranda on the other. Seven bedrooms and a bath were along this hall. The third floor was not divided into rooms but was used for all kinds of purposes.

My father was a staunch democrat and I was too, as long as he lived. Soon after his death my husband and I changed to republicans and he became active in politics. I did, also. He was a county freeholder for twenty-five years and I was a county committee woman for twenty-five years. I was also a charter member of the Women's Republican Club of Port Republic and was the president of the Club 38 yrs. My sister, Caroline, who had married Reg K. Bowen became involved in politics through Ransford J. Abbott of Port Republic who campaigned for Gov. Harold Hoffman. His activity began when he toured the state in a General Electric kitchen type trailer. He became one of New Jersey's leading officials having served under Govs. Hoffman, Driscoll, etc. in the capacities of head of ABC and Highway Commissioner. It was Ransford J. Abbott who caused many of us here in Port Republic to become active in politics on the Republican side. At one time Gov. Hoffman came here and spoke to a large assembly in the local Methodist Church.



Judge French was a staunch Democrat. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)



There always were an interesting variety of cars parked in front of the main house, and the men would frequently gather around and talk. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)

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JUDGE WILLIAM COLLINS FRENCH

(Continued from page 5)

I have mentioned my husband before but not at any length. Harry Hatfield Bennett and I, Genevieve Adelaide French were married on Dec. 19, 1923. Harry was born in Camden, N.J. and so was I. He lived in Pleasantville when we met. He was the son of Mary Emma Williams Bennett and Harry H. Bennett Jr. My brother, Bill (Wm. C. Jr.) married Mary Boice of Pleasantville. My brother, Ted, married Mary Kathryn Smith of Camden. I have mentioned Caroline and husband. My sister, Florence, married Joseph A. Loveland of Port Republic. Woody, my brother, married Vivien Boyle of Collingswood, N.J. Her family had been friends of my mother's family.



Genevieve Adelaide French Bennett in 1927. (Photo courtesy of Alice Adams Weber)

My mother died at the age of 38 having had pneumonia in 1918 the year of the Spanish Influenza epidemic. We had not returned to Camden that fall because of the epidemic so she had passed away at the farm. The services were held at the farmhouse which was large enough for many people to gather. Since I was the oldest (14) and old for my age as the saying goes, I became a woman in some ways from then on. The other children were suppose to recognize a certain authority which is not easy when the person in question is 14. Anyway, I accompanied my father here and there and I remember sitting at the head of the table.

In 1925 our second home in Camden was taken for the Delaware River bridge approach and my father purchased a home at 643 Park Ave. Collingswood. At that time I was married and living at the Farm so I never really lived at Collingswood except for visits the last of which took place for two weeks during my father's last illness.

I have not mentioned our second home in Camden which was at 512 Lenden Street with any detail. My mother was so happy to be moving to North Camden! A narrow street separated our backyard from that of her mother. My mother only lived four years at this home and her mother even less. But she was happy for a while there. The house was one of four white stone front dwellings having four stories. All of the rooms were huge. A stairway wound around from first floor on up with a banister that afforded much pleasure to the younger children for "sliding down." There was a parlor, dining room and kitchen on the first floor. Also, a basement kitchen with a "dumb" waiter. The second floor had a large living room, a library or study for my fathers' huge collection of books, one guest bedroom and bath. The 3rd floor had 3 bedrooms, a bath and sewing room. The 4th floor had the playroom and the maid's room.

May, 1984 Addendum

My father read law in the office of Judge Miller in Camden. He passed the bar as an attorney on Feb. 29th, 1904. He and my mother were married Dec. 2nd, 1903. I was born Oct. 3rd, 1904. His first office was at 428 Marker St., Camden. I remember it. There was a large back yard. My father and friends used to put on boxing gloves in between clients and have work outs behind his office. He prospered as an attorney and was excellent as a negligence attorney, waging war against companies, railroads, etc. Finally a larger and more pretentious office was obtained at 305 Market St. By that time Uncle Sam had passed the bar and was in with my father. After my father died Uncle Sam and his son took over the office.

My brother Theo "Ted" French became an attorney also. Wm. Jr. (Bill) was older but not interested in being a lawyer. He was a beautiful piano player but never took a lesson. His interest was in radio. He was among the first to have a crystal set which he built himself. He was employed at RCA Victor where he died suddenly with a heart attack at the age of 40. He and Ted were very close. Ted's whole life changed. It wasn't long before he sold his house in Westmont and moved to Port Republic. He

restored two old houses and while living in the 2nd along Nacote Creek, he was taken ill with stomach pains which were thought to be appendicitis. It was diverticulosis and he died at the age of 46. He had become a successful lawyer in the Atlantic Co. area. He had given up his office in Camden and opened one in Pleasantville. His son, Ted, Jr., was in the Army at the time. His wife, Mary, and daughter, Linda, sold their house here and moved to Collingswood. Ted Jr. continued in the Army as a career, serving a number of years in England. He is at this time [1984] working in the National Security Agency in Wash. D.C. but his home is in Maryland.

My father and all of us children were in our glory when down at the farm. My husband and I lived at the farm after we were married. With us there the house was kept open for when the rest of the family came on weekends, holidays and summer season. We were always having company. Each of us had our own friends. When I was at school in Camden Friends School and Friends Central, Phil., I brought friends down all the time and they were enthused over the place also. We had great times. And as I said before each of us (6) had our own friends. Our cousins Sam and Nels French and my brothers, Bill and Ted, were a foursome, almost constantly. They, too, had friends from Camden who came down to the farm with them.

When my father died Woody and Florence came down to the farm with Harry and me. Woody changed to Atlantic High for a couple of years. Florence (Pin was her nickname) and Woody and Caroline had been going to Collingswood High. I was appointed Woody and Pin's guardian. We decided Woody should go to a different school which was Valley Forge Military Academy. He was not too pleased, having too good a time with Port fellows, but came to enjoy it. He was a good student. He undertook to study law but took a job with the F.H.A. and from there to Retail Credit Co. in Phil.

I joined the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1966. There were a number of my father's ancestors from whom I could have traced to lineage of a Revolutionary soldier. For instance, the Great John Mathis, Dr. Richard Collins Daniel Lake, Micajah Smith, John Leek, but I chose Thomas Clark who was the closest in generations and also because I live on Clark's Landing Road which leads to the birthplace of the 17th century Clarks. Thomas Clark grandson of this settler lived there, having a large plantation. He was entered into the Revolution at 15 years of age. He is buried in Clark's Mills Cemetery here in Port Republic. He was my great great grandfather through his daughter, Elizabeth who married John Collins (owner of the farm my father bought). Eliz & John were my grandmother's parents.

The farm also had connections with my Grandfather Capt. Wm. Nelson French. His mother was Phoebe Mathis, daughter of Daniel Mathis (Grandson of the Great John Mathis) and Phoebe Smith, daughter of Micajah Smith. Capt. Micajah's son John owned our farm at Chestnut Neck. Micajah retired from his home "The Franklin Inn" retired to the farm at Chestnut Neck, leaving his daughter, Phoebe and her husband Daniel to run the Inn. This they did until Daniel's father, Job Mathis, died and left them property in Burlington Co. They then left Port Republic. Daniel and Phoebe are buried in the Methodist Cemetery in Tuckerton, although the Mathis family were Friends. They were converted to Methodism in Port Republic.

Genevieve Adeline French Bennet's manuscript of this story was provided by William Collins French III, via Sandy Johnson. Bill is Genevieve's nephew and the grandson of Judge French.



William Collins French III and his wife, Joann in 1995. (Photo courtesy of William Collins French III.)

NEWS FROM THE PAST

We are changing the format of our "News from the Past" column to center around New Gretna news reported in a particular back issue of the *Tuckerton Beacon*. We'll be choosing issues that mention someone featured in accompanying *Bass River Gazette* articles or mention people who read the *Gazette*. The news items are actual transcriptions from the *Tuckerton Beacon*, but we have added photos which we hope will make the news more interesting to our readers. Should you have photos of anyone mentioned below, we would appreciate you sharing them with us, so that they would be available for future editions. Below you will see Arthur Loveland, who is featured in Ken Mick's story on page 2, mentioned. Some of our regular readers and their relatives are also mentioned such as Steve Potter's grandmom Mabel Sooy and Donald Maxwell who still is spinning stories. (Hey, Donald, how about spinning one in our direction for our next edition?) We hope everyone enjoys this walk down Memory Lane.

NEW GREटना NEWS February 19, 1948

Don't forget the PTA program in the New Gretna Methodist Church at 8 P. M. Sunday to which both Green Bank and New Gretna Associations are invited.

Mrs. Alice Rafter and daughter Liria Lee and Mrs. Richard Storey spent Friday in Absecon.

Mr. and Mrs. Talbert McAnney visited friends in Oceanville Wednesday evening.

Mrs. Anna Leepa was a recent visitor with her children in Philadelphia.

Mr. **Arthur Loveland** has been confined to his home with a cold.

Miss Betty McAnney and Nadine Smith spent Saturday evening in Pleasantville.

Mrs. Wanda Donelick spent Wednesday in Egg Harbor City.

Mrs. Verna Wiseman and son Stanley were Atlantic City visitors on Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hoar of Beach Haven visited her parents, Capt. and Mrs. Jesse Loveland, and called on the Robbins-McAnney family.

Miss Betty McAnney and Steve Potter, Nadine Smith and George Flagg attended the holiday dance in THS Gym on Wednesday evening.



Alberta Cramer with baby Jim McAnney. Alberta was the mother of Almira Cramer Steele who wrote the "Another Thing I Remember" column in the *Gazette*. (Photo courtesy of Almira Cramer Steele)

Mr. Benj. Broome had a successful operation on Tuesday in Hahnemann Hospital and very much improved. Mr. and Mrs. William Dillon and Mrs. Benj. Broome spent Sunday noon with Mr. Broome, and he is expected home soon.

The Drucilla Class meets Thursday with Mrs. **Alberta Cramer**.

Mr. Chris Ostergaard arrived safely after a rough voyage from Denmark.

Mrs. Chris. Ostergaard and Miss Bender left for a trip to Westville, N. J. and West Point, N. Y.

Mr. William Corliss fell on the ice Friday night and broke a bone in his hip.

Miss Betty McAnney, Miss Nadine Smith, Mr. Steve Potter and Mr. George Flagg attended the basket ball game Monday night in Tuckerton.

Mrs. Sara Mathis arrived home Sunday noon, and is up and about and doing very well.

Mrs. Paul Ludwig and son Werner and Mrs. Alice Rafter spent Monday and Tuesday in New York City.

Mrs. Ida Mathis is improving slowly but still confined to bed. Friends who have called on Mrs. Mathis the past week are: Mr. and Mrs. William Arnold, Miss Elsie Smith, Mr. **Alvin McAnney**, Mr. and Mrs. William Downs, Mrs.

James Heayn, Mrs. Walter Roberts and Mr. Marvin Mathis spent Thursday afternoon in Pleasantville and Absecon.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of the Presbyterian Church held their annual luncheon meeting at the home of Miss Emma Bogan.

Those who attended the viewing on Monday night of Mrs. Louis Maison, from New Gretna were: Mr. and Mrs. Harold Gerew, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Z. Mathis, Mrs. Henry Updike, Mr. and Mrs. Birdsall Adams, Mrs. Walter O'Neil, Mrs. Edward Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Millard Wheeler.

Saturday callers of Miss Elsie Smith were Mr. and Mrs. Horace Somes and son of New Lisbon and Miss Mary Albor of Green Bank.



Donald Maxwell (r), chatting with Stanley Mathis, spent a lot of time in front of Eddie's Store on Old New York Road in New Gretna. (Photo courtesy of Floyd and Betty Lamson West.)

Alvin McAnney served as Township Clerk in Bass River. (Photo courtesy of Margaret Cramer McAnney.)

Mr. **Donald Maxwell** arrived at his home Tuesday, from Japan, via San Francisco after being away 14 months and 3 days, and is honorably discharged.

The local school children

donated \$900 to the Polio Fund. Rev. and Mrs. Champion Goldy and son Champ spent Saturday with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Holler in Pitman, after calling on Mrs. Sara Mathis and Mr. Beni. Broome in the hospitals in Philadelphia.

Mr. Herbert Strickland of Port Republic visited his mother, **Mrs. Pitman Mathis** Saturday evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Carrol Cramer and daughter Melva visited Mrs. Horace Cramer Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Z. Mathis called on Mrs. Sara Mathis in Episcopal Hospital on Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Z. Mathis and Miss Theora Cramer spent Thursday in Atlantic City.

The Young Ladies' Guild will meet at the home of Mrs. Elsa Roe.



Mrs. Pitman Mathis. (Photo courtesy of Robert Quinn.)

(Continued on page 3)

LEVI'S BARBERSHP and the WOULD BE CORPSE

A true story by the Herrintown Poet



Levi's Barber Shop was the center of much excitement in Herrintown (Photo courtesy of Helen Sears Carty.)

"Levi's Barber Shop" was a place of friendly society here in Herrintown, and whatever was happening in town, everyone heard about it first hand at the barber shop. The personality of the proprietor was the drawing card that kept the regular crowd entertained. Levi was fittingly dubbed "The Potentate of Whit", and he had a celebrated reputation as a story teller and jokester.

Levi was "well read" and was known to have traveled outside of the boundaries of Herrintown as far and wide as New York City and Philadelphia, and there ain't no subject he can't talk on . . . and he gave good shaves and haircuts. He was self taught. He watched other barbers work til he got the hang of it, then started out on his own.

Levi stood five feet two inches tall and verged on portly. His keen blue eyes gave his face its entertaining appearance. He wore black silk socks and patent leather, low cut shoes on his feet with fallen arches.

His wit was especially sharp on the day F.A. Gray, who was always in a hurry, flopped down in the chair and came out with, "Can you shave me with my collar on?" "Sure thing," answered Levi, "and I can cut your hair with your hat on."



F.A. Gray was always in a hurry. (Photo courtesy of Franklin W. Gray.)

Levi was always on the look out for any new business that would bring him added income, and so it was that he had published it around Herrintown that he had, in his travels, fallen into good luck and found the cure for falling hair and had the remedy right here on the shelf ready for sale. He told everyone that would listen about the wonderful hair tonic that smelled like lilacs and claimed it would save your hair and make you feel younger or your money back . . . "Guaranteed!"

Boot Mathis spread it around town that he had "fallen for it" and bought a pint of Levi's "Good Luck" tonic that smelled like lilacs. Boot said that he used every bit of the stuff, as directed, but nothing happened, not one new hair ever showed up on his bald head. But when he asked Levi for his money back, Levi said "I promised to sell you something that would save your hair." Boot said Levi gave him a shoe box. Sales of the tonic that smelled like lilacs fell off after that story got around town.

For a peek into the life of another culture we need go no further back than "Levi's Barber Shop" here in Herrintown. Not long ago in small towns across rural America the barber shop, marked by its red and white striped barber pole, held a special place in the community, binding together everyday life. In Herrintown, it was "Levi's Barber Shop" where men gathered to discuss politics, to pass around the latest news in town, and trade stories about their work in the bay.



Levi was a somewhat portly five feet two inches tall and had a feel for making a buck. (Photo courtesy of Tom Williams.)



Booter Mathis tried to get his " guaranteed refund" from Levi. (Photo courtesy of Howard Ware.)

Well, as I started to tell you, there was plenty of fun in "Levi's Barber Shop" on Saturdays. That's when Evert Allen would show up right after supper, and there was always a chair reserved for him. But he would mostly stand and walk up and down. Now, Levi was comical and Evert was pretty much his match. There was nothing in the way of a joke that Evert couldn't think up. Just give him a chance, and he'd set everybody to laughing.

Now, Evert had a trick that came to him as a natural gift. He could make you think he was a girl talking, and he could mimic just about any man's voice.

In Herrintown, there was an age old custom that when a man is dead and needs a shave and his moustache trimmed, the barber was called out to the man's home to shave and trim the corpse. Levi said that he kinda liked trimming up a dead man, for one thing says Levi, "They lay still, don't do much talking, and pass no complaints."

This custom was a perfect fit for the plot that Evert was hatching. So, he put his natural talent to work and pulled off the biggest ruse that Levi was ever caught up in. And, here's how it came off.



Doc Carmona kept an eye out for old Mister Bondsdale over the years. (Tuckerton Beacon photo)

Old Mister Bondsdale lived up the Allentown Road in Leektown. He'd been doctorin' for years with Doc Carmona without no results. So when Levi was called across the street to Clarence's Store to get a phone call, he didn't suspect that a prank was in the making.

Levi placed the telephone speaker up to his ear and listened. He heard a woman's voice. This is what it said "Mister Bondsdale is dead." And "Would the barber come and shave and trim the corpse? I want to get him ready to lay out tomorrow."

Well, Levi was completely taken in by the pathetic sounding voice on the telephone. He tells the caller that he'd be coming to do the job as soon as he closed up the barber shop and, "By the way, the charge is five dollars."

It was getting late and the weather was turning cold. Levi locked up the shop, got his barber tools together, and hired Delwin Downs to drive him up to old Mister Bondsdale's place in Leektown.

A half hour later, Delwin let the old Dodge roll to a stop in front of the little cottage with the slanting porch floor and steep narrow steps. The little house was dark, not a light shining in any window. Levi came picking his way up the steps to the door and knocked. When there was no answer, he knocked again, made some noise, and called out, "The barber is here!" and waited.

That's when old Mister Bondsdale, as alive as he could be, pulled open the door and stood staring at Levi. Levi flushed a little red in the face, turned on his heel, and pretty near fell down the steps in his hurry to get back to the car where he found Delwin bent double over the steering wheel, laughing. But Delwin quickly got over his laughing spell. He had suddenly remembered that Levi still owed him a dollar and a half for the taxi ride to Leektown.

Delwin wiped the water out of his eyes, cranked up the old blue Dodge, and pointed it back down the Allen Road to Herrintown. Levi sank down in the seat beside him, looking straight ahead and said nothing. He knew he'd been skunked and there was nothing he could do about it.

Everybody in Herrintown gives out a chuckle when they remember what happened that Saturday night, and nobody could have thought it up but Evert.

[Editor's Note:Everett is spelled phonetically as "Evert", as it was pronounced in Herrintown.]



Everett proved a match for Levi when it came to practical jokes. (Photo courtesy of Jean Allen Lainhart.)



Delwin Downs gave Levi a ride to Mister Bondsdale's house. (Photo courtesy of Norman and Ann Mathis.)