

ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

SPRING 2022

THE COLD WAR... ON A HOT SUMMER DAY

At first glance, this appears to be a photo of a regular summer day on the Atlantic City beach but a closer look will reveal that those are empty towels.

On July 12, 1957 a civil defense drill was held along the beach and the City Civil Defense Director Joseph Hackney estimated 77,000 persons all took "shelter" back by the Boardwalk and cabanas. (Many reading this will recall regular civil defense drills at school and "taking shelter" by hiding under their desks or standing in school auditoriums with their eyes covered.)

Weirdly, only two weeks after this drill took place and this photo was taken, a bomb incident took place off the Jersey Shore. According to "Report on Histories

of Nuclear Weapon Accidents" an official document printed by the US Department of Defense and the Department of Energy, a C-124 aircraft from Dover AFB en route to Europe experienced engine trouble. Onboard were three weapons and one nuclear capsule. The closest airfield was Atlantic City Naval Air Station. With two engines out the plane was forced to jettison cargo to maintain altitude, including two of the weapons which did not detonate. The C-124 landed safely with the remaining weapon and the nuclear capsule. A search for the weapons had negative results.

Our thanks to Bob Warrington for another great image that he has donated to our collection.

By Cindy Mason-Purdie



The Society opened its doors to the public on March 2, 2022.

Regular days/hours are:
Wed.-Sat., 10am- 3:30pm.

Events and Happenings

Program Logistics

Program Description

RISLEY HOMESTEAD

8 Virginia Avenue
(near 400 block of Shore Rd
Northfield, NJ



The [Risley Homestead](#) is one of two 18th century houses in Atlantic County individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was home to many generations of Risley oystermen. The ACHS received the Homestead and its furnishings by bequest from Virginia Risley Stout in 1989. The Homestead is open for individual and small group guided tours. Contact ACHS for details.

ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

907 Shore Road, Somers Point

Monday, April 4th , 6:30pm

GUERRILLAS, BANDITS, DESERTERS AND DEFENDERS AT THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR.

Suzanne Gibson, former VP of the Cape May Civil War Round Table & past Secretary of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Civil War Round Table will present.

ATLANTIC COUNTY UTILITIES AUTHORITY (ACUA)

Delilah Rd., Egg Harbor Twp. *Inside the Tent*

Sunday, April 24th – 10:00-4:00

EARTH DAY @ ACUA

The Atlantic County Historical Society will have a booth at the Earth Day EcoFair at the Atlantic County Utilities Authority's annual event, which draws thousands of visitors. Come out to see us and get acquainted with what ACHS has to offer!

ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

907 Shore Road, Somers Point

Monday, May 23rd, 6:30pm

EARLY SHELL FISHING ON LAKES BAY

Jake Glassey will share his memories of clamming and oystering on Lakes Bay, complete with display items.

ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

907 Shore Road, Somers Point

June 13th, 6:30pm

COMING TO AMERICA THROUGH ELLIS ISLAND

Norm Goos and Lynn Wood will introduce this short film.

Yard Sale

Saturday, June 4th
(rain date, June 11th)
8:00am – 2:00pm

Many items for sale,
including extra
Library books.
All proceeds benefit the
ACHS

Risley Homestead
8 Virginia Avenue
(near 400 block of Shore Rd)
Northfield, NJ

VHP AND QUILTS OF VALOR PRESENTATIONS

At the November meeting of the *Four Seasons Veterans Club*, guests representing the Veterans History Project (VHP) and the Quilts of Valor (QOV) Organizations were introduced. The VHP is the Library of Congress' outreach to citizens who have served in the military to record their experiences for future generations of researchers studying defense issues. The Atlantic County Historical Society conducts interviews and data collection from county Vets. The QOV's mission is to give Vets a "warm welcome home" after service.

Together, these groups honored the military contributions of our members Bob Best, Ted Johnson, Richard Price, Wally Quintrell, Russ Stevenson and Jerry Timmons. The CD versions of their military memories will be available in the Library of Congress and the Atlantic County Historical Society for the VHP. All six were then wrapped in hand-made quilts as a belated-warm welcome back to civilian life by the Quilts of Valor representatives. Both presentations were well received and appreciated by the more than 100 attendees.

Left: Russ Stevenson, Richard Price, Wally Quintrell, and Ted Johnson wearing quilts of Valor. (*Not pictured: Gerry Timmons and Bob Best*)

Right: Quilts being adjusted by Jane French of the QOV team.



Member News



DONATIONS

FRIEND \$1 - \$49

Sally Pietrofitta, Colleen Basile,
Patrick & Andrea McVeigh

PATRON \$50 - \$249

Megan & Wayne Ernst, Michael Morello,
Steve Jasiecki, Pat & Sid Parker,
Judy & Gary Newton, Anne Ronne,
Sheryl Collins, *In Memory of: Joseph Walsh*

SPONSOR \$250 - \$1000

Jim & Lucille Leeds

BENEFACTOR \$1000 +

Robert Stiefbold *In Memory of: Joanne Stiefbold*

Welcome

New Members

Jim Higgins, *Myrtle Beach, SC*
Samuel G. Ashdown, Jr., *Indialantic, Florida*

New Life Member

Judith LaDrew Bayer, *Bethesda, MD*

~In Memoriam~

*The Atlantic County Historical Society
honors the passing of members:*

Marilyn Gallagher
Doris B. Michel



OUR HOLIDAY SWEET SALE... SWEET SUCCESS!



Many Thanks to our faithful cookie sale bakers and our customers!

Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

Email: ACHSinfo@comcast.net

Visit our Facebook page or website

www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org

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Diane Miller, Brittani Mazzone, Lynn Wood & Charlene Canale

*The Atlantic County Historical Society received an operating grant
from the Atlantic County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.*

Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

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Dana Shupp, Lynn Wood

Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

History of Estell Manor

By
Kenneth N. Scull

Editor's Note: The following was an oral presentation given to the Estell Manor P.T.A. on September 16, 1975, by Kenneth N. Scull, historian and first vice-president of the Atlantic County Historical Society in 1972. The historical facts related by Mr. Scull are enhanced by his personal insights and deep roots to this geographical area.

The article's original length has been shortened for space considerations, yet despite these space-saving measures, we plan to continue it in the next ACHS newsletter. The full account is found in Collection Box 3B, folder 15c, Marjorie K. Cramer Collection. This transcription closely follows the typed copy on file. Information in brackets was added by the transcriber.

Weymouth Township and especially that part which our forefathers called Stephen's Creek, later Estellville, has always held a special place in my heart for it was here my Steelman Ancestors settled sometime in the 1730's and my great great great grandfather Benjamin Scull was living on his 1100 acres on both sides of the Tuckahoe River as early as 1785. Part of this tract was in what is now Estell Manor.

After the glass works was established at Estellville in 1825, my Scull ancestors worked there until the works closed in the 1870's at which time they moved to Millville where they worked for the Whitall Tatum Company. In addition, my grandmother Sallie Budden was appointed Village Schoolteacher in Estellville in 1878 and 2 years later she married my grandfather Scull. They no doubt met in Estellville.

You will note that I mentioned Stephen's Creek, for Estellville was not called by this name until the 1830's according to many old records I have examined. The village was named for John Estell and the Estell family.*ⁱ For whom was the creek named? As a title examiner for South Jersey Title Company years ago I found a survey which mentioned the name Stephen Gibson and this name is no doubt the origin of the name of Gibson's Creek as well as Stephen's Creek....

One of the first settlers in the Stephen's Creek area was Andrew Steelman, born in 1719 and who died in 1772. His father's name was also Andrew and the father was born in 1689 and died in 1736. The mother's name was Judith Olsen. By his willⁱⁱ, Andrew Steelman I left his son Frederick 420 acres purchased of John Budd and Samuel Adams between South River and Stephen's Creek, joining the Great Egg Harbor River. By the 4th paragraph, he gave his son Andrew the Plantation on which he lived which would now lie at Shore Road and Tilton Road in Northfield, N.J. today. This plantation contained 200 acres and adjoined James Somers.

Years ago, I ran across evidence in the Title Company files that Dr. Philip Sheridan Steelman of Northfield stated Andrew Steelman II and Frederick Steelman his brother swapped lands inherited from their father, Frederick taking the homestead plantation and Andrew II taking up the land between South River and Stephen's Creek. This information has since been verified as Reverend Robert B. Steelman has copies of these deeds.

Andrew II moved to the Stephen's Creek area sometime after his father's death and married Hannah Ingersoll on June 3, 1746 when he was [38 years old is crossed out and 27 written above which, when figured with his date of birth, appears to be correct]. It is quite likely he established the first saw mill on James Branch and also a mill on Gibson's Creek.

Five years after the marriage of Andrew and Hannah, a son was born who was named Frederick Steelman. He was born March 25, 1752 and on October 4, 1773, he married Naomi Edwardsⁱⁱⁱ, daughter of Joseph and Elizabeth Ingersoll Edwards. Both Joseph Edwards and his son-in-law Frederick Steelman served in the Revolutionary War. Frederick as a Private in the Gloucester County Militia, 3rd Battalion and Joseph Edwards in a different capacity. He was a privateer and his name frequently appears with that of Captain William Treen of Cape May County. Edwards was Captain of the Privateer "Luck & Fortune" and served on the Brig Fame which capsized in Little Egg Harbour in January 1781 during a severe snow and ice storm at night.

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Looking Back through the Files.....*continued*

Edwards and Treen were ashore. The following morning, 9 men were found clinging to the bottom of the capsized vessel one of whom was Jonathan Steelman, a distant relative. Many of the men died before being brought ashore and an excellent account of this wreck may be found in "Smuggler's Woods" by Arthur D. Pierce, c. 1960.^{iv}

Frederick Steelman became a very prominent man in this area and was a Judge of the Inferior Court. These Judges were not Lawyers but were laymen who would sit on the bench with a regular judge and consider evidence before the Bar. This system endured in New Jersey until 1899 when it was finally abolished. The system no doubt had its place in those days when many illiterate people did not trust Lawyers or Courts and they probably felt more secure with a Layman also on the bench.

At his death in August 1809^v in Stephen's Creek, Frederick Steelman's home was on Naomi's Mill Road, 6 rods from the mill pond. This is where James Branch crosses the road which is now called Maple Avenue for Maple Avenue is the former Naomi's Mill Road. Naomi's Pond is now called Lake Florence and was named for Florence Bourgeois, daughter of George Bourgeois the Lawyer. Personally, I prefer the name Naomi's Mill Pond.

When Frederick Steelman my ancestor died, he owned in excess of 3,873 acres in what is now Atlantic and Cumberland Counties and one survey along the Tuckahoe River encompassed 2000 acres. This adjoined Benjamin Scull's 1100 acres and I imagine there was a well beaten path between the Scull and Steelman plantations for several Scull boys married Steelman girls. At Frederick's death, like most landed proprietors of those days, he was land poor and by the year 1820, most of his land had left the family as it had been sold by the High Sheriff of Gloucester County to satisfy judgments against his estate...The executors of Frederick's estate were Naomi the widow and his son-in-law Frederick Steelman of Gravelly Run.

One thing which has baffled genealogists for years is the fact there were 4 Frederick Steelmans all living in this area at the same time.

On November 16, 1974, the Friends of Old Estellville Church dedicated an historic marker marking the graves of Andrew Steelman II who died in 1772 and the graves of 4 of the children of Frederick and Naomi Edwards Steelman. These old graves were fenced in by C. Creston Steelman of Pleasantville and a monument erected "In Memory of All the Steelmans in South Jersey." The birth and death dates from each remaining tomb stone was inscribed on the sign as these were fast becoming indecipherable. This job fell to your speaker and he also made sure the birth and death dates of Frederick and Naomi Steelman as well as the fact he was a Revolutionary War Veteran also appeared on this sign. It is my belief the parents are also buried in this old graveyard.

There are many more old graves in this cemetery marked only by Jersey sandstones. In addition, years ago, I saw the remains of wooden tombstones in this Cemetery. The County of Atlantic has been notified not to remove any stones in the cemetery area in order that a plot plan of burial there can be made^{vi}....

Several months after the dedication of the sign in the old Cemetery, the area was acquired by Atlantic County as a County Park which was dedicated on July 4th this year....

Also in the area of the new County Park are the ruins of the old Estellville Glassworks where my ancestors worked. This was established by John Scott in 1825 to make hollow ware and window glass and by 1834, Scott had sold out to Daniel E. Estell. The "Glass Gaffers of New Jersey" by Adeline Pepper^{vii}, c. 1971, has a very good history of the Estellville Glass Works and according to Miss Pepper, activity peaked there about 1840 when the works employed about 80 persons. Later, the works was taken over by two men named Getsinger and Rosenbaum from Port Elizabeth and by the year 1875, the installation was owned by Alexander Sharp, however competition from coal fueled plants in Pennsylvania caused the plant to close in 1877.

During World War I, the Bethlehem Loading Company purchased around 12,000 acres extending from the Weymouth-Hamilton Township lines nearly to Tuckahoe. Many families were forced to leave their homes and farms in the area and it was about this time the Church in Estellville closed down. In 1920 or 1921, the land was purchased by Harry Godshall who established a Game Preserve and who recently sold most of the old Preserve to Atlantic County.

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Looking Back through the Files.....continued

This is pretty much a capsule history of this area of Estell Manor but there is another area of which I would like to speak. **[To be continued]**

i This * leads to the following explanation at the foot of the first page: "John Estell had a store in Estellville. He died in 1839 and Book A of Inventories in the Atl. Co. Clerk's office contains page after page of names of persons who evidently owed Mr. Estell a store bill at his death. This record is almost a census of the people living in that village in 1839."

ii Will of Andrew Steelman, 2 Jan 1731, proved 5 Feb 1736; a photocopy of the original is at ACHS, Kenneth N. Scull Collection, Genealogy File 112, pgs. 18-21.

iii Marriage bond of Frederick Steelman and Neomy Edwards, 4 Oct 1773, is found at ACHS, Dorothy Sapienzo Collection, Collection Box 14B, folder 44.

iv This book is in the ACHS library, call number: F135.2.

v According to the ACHS' digital library catalog, the will of Frederick Steelman, 19 Aug 1807, probated 28 Aug 1809 is found in the Kenneth N. Scull Collection, Genealogy File 109, p. 7.

vi The transcriber was unable to discover if this plot plan was ever completed.

vii This book is in the ACHS library, call number: Q329.2.



Left: Estellville Glassworks photo by Jack E. Boucher, ACHS photo file #936a; **Middle:** Cemetery at Stephen's Creek, Steelman Burial Ground, Estell Manor County Park, photo by Jack E. Boucher, ACHS photo file #939. The stone in the right, foreground is that of Andrew Steelman who died Feb. 9, 1772, aged 53 years. "Farewell my Wife & Children Dear, My Brothers, Sisters & my Friends. I hope to meet you in the Heavens, Where all things hath an End." **Right:** Marker at Steelman Burial Ground, a small cemetery which is enclosed by a log fence just behind the Atlantic County Veterans Cemetery in Estell Manor Park, www.revolutionarywarnewjersey.com, accessed 30 Jan 2022. The marker reads, "This ground was part of the large plantation of Andrew Steelman, 1719-Feb. 9, 1772. Also buried here are the following children of Frederick and Naomi Edwards Steelman: Submittee Steelman, died Sept. 8, 1793; Richard Steelman, died Aug. 6, 1792; Naomi Steelman, died Aug. 25, 1784; Sarah Steelman, died Aug. 28, 1784. The parents, Frederick Steelman, Revolutionary War veteran, Mar. 25, 1752-July 29, 1809 and Naomi Steelman, Aug. 21, 1755-April 21, 1847, are probably buried in unmarked graves..."



Spotlight on the Shelves

a treasure hiding in plain sight...

By Brittani Mazzone

During the Revolutionary War, the shores of the rebellious colonies were both a passage to freedom as well as an unexpected deathtrap. As the British and Americans fought over troubled waters, many crossing ships were ambushed and taken over by enemy forces. As a result, prison ships became a dreaded reality for those who were unfortunate enough to be captured.

We have an enlightening first-hand account of the experience aboard one of the prison ships named *Jersey*. *Recollections of the Jersey Prison Ship* (J2251) contains the account of Capt. Thomas Dring who was a prisoner on the ship in 1782 for nearly five months, stationed at Wallabout outside of Long Island. He painstakingly recorded the horrors that plagued him and approximately 11,000 other prisoners during the ship's service. Inspired by the words of Philip Freneau, famous poet and also a prisoner aboard a similar British ship, Dring described the wretched life aboard the *Jersey* in great detail. For example, during his first days in captivity, Dring realized that many men were suffering from smallpox, which killed large numbers of prisoners. He described the process of inoculating himself manually with the disease. He also described the horrendous state of the dungeons, which were unbearably hot with no fresh air, the moldy bread and suet for meals, and the daunting task of burying those who had died the night before. After one burial, he carried a handful of dirt and grass on board so that the men could remember the smell of the land like "a fragrant rose." Dring notes that he could never fully enjoy even the rare occasion of obtaining any indulgence, as he watched the faces of the living dead, dying of want. After the evacuation of New York in 1783, the ship was abandoned and burnt, left to sink along with the memories of countless souls that met their terrible fate aboard the *Jersey*.

OLD NEWS

By Dale Lonkart

This column will appear for the next several issues of the Newsletter. It is a look back at “happenings” from our old newsletters.

What an amazing history we have – thanks to our volunteers and members!

In the beginning... the 1970s

Sept., 1977

Some members working on our Friendship Quilt would meet weekly in the Children’s Room of Somers Mansion, apparently delighting visiting tourists.

A look back to 1943, when it was reported that the State of NJ had finished restoration of the Somers Mansion. The Society bore the sponsor’s share of the restoration expense, which took all our available cash, but it was considered money well spent.

Fall/Winter 1978

Upcoming Annual Dinner will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Richard Somers. The speaker, Commander Tyrone Martin’s (USN Retired) first command was the *USS Richard Somers DC 947* and his last was the *Constitution*, which made a famous escape from the British just off Egg Harbor.

We received a \$100 grant from the NJ Historical Commission to conduct oral histories in Atlantic County. A number of interviews had been completed. (These interviews were on old cassette tapes, which are almost obsolete, so current volunteer Mary Rydzewski has been able to put them into our computer system, using a program that can even out the sound quality. SAVED!!)

Summer 1979

Highlighted was a 1905 fund raising event from the *Atlantic Review*. A “Foot Social” to raise money for a church. Young ladies sit behind a curtain with only their feet exposed. Feet are auctioned to the highest bidder. Young men bid for the pair they want and get the privilege of dancing with the young lady all evening and providing her supper.

Then & Now!

Then & Now will become a regular feature in our Newsletter, showcasing some of the incredible photos in the ACHS collection.



Then: Sooy’s Ice Cream Parlor on Shore Road in Somers Point. Built in 1896, this building was a post office and an A&P in addition to the ice cream parlor. Sooy’s was opened by Lurelda Sooy around 1910.



Now: Charlie’s Bar, opened in 1944 by Charlie & Helen Thomas. The front part of building housed Charlie’s tap room. The back part of the building housed Gerety’s Market, the Burger Hut & Mother’s Kitchen over the years. It is operated today by the 4th generation of the Thomas family.



**ATLANTIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**



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**ATLANTIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL**



SOCIETY

Where Atlantic County History Comes to Life



Our Mission:

- To collect and preserve historical materials exemplifying the events, places, and lifestyles of the people of Atlantic County and southern New Jersey.
- To encourage the study of history and genealogy.
- To provide historical and genealogical information to our membership and the general public.