

# ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

WINTER 2022

## THE ODD RELATIONSHIP OF THE VICTORIANS WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

*Kathleen Pullan Watkins, Ed.D.*

While it began in the United Kingdom, influenced largely by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), the Victorian era had far flung influence across Europe and America. Shaped by the Queen's unyielding moral standards, Victoriana affected fashion and social mores for more than 60 years. Despite being a period of revolutionary industrial growth and breakthrough in the arts and sciences, this age was also dominated by social rigidity and excessive romanticism. Victoria's star-crossed marriage to Albert, Prince of Saxe-Coburg, and his early demise from typhoid fever gave rise to a move away from rationalism and toward greater belief in Spiritualism, the influence of Divine Providence.

One of the more notable inventions of the Victorian period was the production of the first daguerreotype photograph (1835). A complicated process requiring an exposure period of at least five minutes, the daguerreotype was far less costly in time and money than sitting for a painted portrait. In addition to the extended period required for the sitter to remain still, these photographs had to be framed behind glass with the edges sealed to prevent oxidation. Only a single image could be created from a sitting. Nevertheless, by 1853 there were three million daguerreotype images being produced annually in the United States.

### Carte-de-Visite and Photocollage



The next advance in photography occurred in 1854, when Andre Disderi invented the carte-de-visite, a 2 ½ by 4 inch paper, portrait calling card. With an exposure time of only about 30 seconds, eight different poses could be produced at a single sitting. The new photographs were inexpensive enough for even the working classes, and soon were being dropped off when visiting, collected and even traded. Celebrities of the day had their own carte-de-visite, and these were eagerly sought by the public.

Pastimes were few for upper class Victorians. Accomplished young women learned to play an instrument, sang and danced. They attended the theater and occasionally played cards or croquet. Others collected items from nature and drew or painted watercolors. It is no surprise that in a culture where boredom was commonplace, using the new carte-de-visite in collage became the rage among the well-to-do. It is not known who first took her album of calling cards and had the brilliant idea to cut them up using the heads as components of watercolor paintings. The resulting photocollages were at times humorous or slightly scandalous, made social commentary or poked fun. The more clever the artist, the more subtle the message. Callers to her home would crowd around her latest creations to puzzle out the meaning behind each image. Even so, a young lady needed to take care. If her covert insult or insinuation went too far she could damage her own reputation.



### Post Mortem Photography

After the death of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria entered a period of prolonged mourning that lasted for 40 years. In Victorian times death was an everyday occurrence. Infant mortality rates were high, as was the instance of typhoid, smallpox, diphtheria and cholera. There were few vaccines and no antibiotics. Just as her white wedding gown (a first in its time) continues to influence the brides of today, Victorians quickly adopted the wearing of black clothing at the death of loved ones. Widows wore it perpetually to signify their marital status. They also wore mourning jewelry made entirely from or containing the hair of the deceased. By 1860, it had become commonplace to photograph the dead. Some magazines of

*Continued on page 2*

# Events and Happenings

## Program Logistics

### RISLEY HOMESTEAD

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



Saturdays & Sundays, 11am – 4pm

## Program Description

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 led by Molly Senack. Contact ACHS for details.

### *Victorian Photography ....continued*

the day contained instructions for posing the deceased. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century death often came to the young and, even after a short illness, cheeks were sometimes tinted to give the illusion of health. In rare instances, open eyes were painted onto closed eyelids in the finished photo. The mourning tableaux was popular. Family members were posed around or pictured holding the deceased. Post mortem carte-de-visite could be shared with family and friends and were often placed in albums. However, as life expectancy increased these photos became less common.

### Spirit Photography



In March 1861 in Boston, an amateur photographer named William H. Mumber accidentally took a second picture on a previously exposed photographic plate. The result was a ghostly image standing beside his subject, and spirit photography was born. Duplicious photographers quickly learned they could overlay photographic images to create the impression of a deceased loved one, hand laid lovingly on the shoulder of the grieving. In this epoch of exaggerated mourning these photos became another way to memorialize and establish a link to those lost. Spiritualists became convinced these were scientific proof of the existence of an afterlife. When Mary Todd Lincoln had her portrait taken with the late President standing lovingly beside her, others were galvanized to seek out spirit photographers. Controversy soon developed and Mumber stood trial, accused of fraud. He was exonerated, and the debate continued with notables such as writer Arthur Conan Doyle (pro) and show

man P.T. Barnum (con) taking sides in the argument. Even so, as the Victorian epoch ended so did spirit photography.

### Headless and Other Humorous Photography

The Victorians could sometimes be playful as evidenced by their discovery that photos could be manipulated in ways other than the production of spirits. In 1853, after many weeks of work and countless negatives, Swedish photographer Oscar Rejlander was able to produce an image that made it appear that a subject was carrying his own head. Poking fun at their macabre fascination with and fear of death, Victorians were subsequently depicted with their heads on pikes, on platters, and even carrying the weapon used to behead them. While the Victorians were generally straight-laced, they now and then gave way to base emotions and allowed themselves to be photographed looking ridiculous. Tongues out, eyes crossed, bodies contorted into strange positions, these more unusual photos of the time showed the Victorians sometimes dared to defy convention.



### Hidden Mother Photography



Since the advent of photography people have wanted likenesses of their children, and the Victorians were no exception. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the extended exposure time could be an issue with a fidgety baby or toddler. The solution devised at the time was to position an infant in his mother's arms while draping her in fabric so that she became "invisible" to the viewer. In some cases only the head of the mother was covered. Portrait studios sometimes even hired young women to be baby holders. Although this was likely calming to most young children it resulted in the image of a specter-like figure behind the child. This very odd practice begs the question: why not just take a charming mother-child photo? Somehow it was determined that the presence of the mother could distract from the beauty of the child. Fortunately, this odd custom was short-lived.

The dawn of widely available photography impacted its use by Victorians in ways we might see today as humorous or weird, as well as in ways we might recognize. While researching this article I was struck by recollections of older family members photographing our own relations in their coffins; by the interest of many in scrapbooking; and by the attraction of some people to ghost hunter reality programs. However you approach it, the Victorian period is fascinating, equal parts civilized and horrific; beautiful and ugly; rigid and inventive. Their photography provides an absorbing look into a bygone time.



*Editor's Note:  
A number of  
daguerrotypes  
are on display  
at the museum.*

# Member News



## DONATIONS

### *Friend \$1 - \$49*

George & Carol Guiliano, Ray & Susan Notaro,  
Walt & Lois Gregory, Kathy Fritz, Frances Brewin,  
Dana & Lynn Shupp, Joseph & Judith Courter,  
Jeannine Ingenito, Paul Schopp, Charlene Canale

### *Patron \$50 - \$249*

Wayne & Megan Ernst, Robert & Carol Warrington,  
Charles Birnstiel, Michael Connor, James Foreman,  
Barbara Perry-Silva, Carolyn Patterson, Elinor Veit,  
Will & Amy Rozell, Joan Berkey & Scott Smith,  
Tony Marino & Rosalia Valenti,  
Descendants of the Founders of New Jersey  
National Society Sons & Daughters of the Pilgrims,  
NJ Branch

### *Sponsor \$250 - \$1000*

Thomas Kinsella, Robert Stiefbold,  
Michael O'Brien, General Lafayette Chapter, DAR

The Atlantic County Historical Society will be closed:  
*Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> through Wednesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>,  
reopening, Thursday, January 5, 2023*

**NOTE: OUR REGULAR HOURS ARE NOW:**  
Thursday – Saturday: 10:00 – 3:30pm

# Welcome

## NEW MEMBERS

Kathleen Lajiness, *Linwood, NJ*  
Roger & Andrea Scull, *Vineland, NJ*  
Austin Faller, *Oakhurst, NJ*  
Catharine Karsten, *Ocean City, NJ*

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Robert & Despina Protesto, *Somers Pt., NJ*  
David N. Risley, Jr., *Oceanview, NJ*  
Cindy Mason Purdie, *Linwood, NJ*

## In Memoriam

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

Ralph Larned



## HOLIDAY SWEET SALE!

Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup>  
3:00pm – 6:00pm  
@ACHS  
907 Shore Road  
Somers Point

## Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

Email: [ACHSinfo@comcast.net](mailto:ACHSinfo@comcast.net)

Visit our Facebook page or website

[www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org](http://www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org)

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Brittani Mazzone Lynn Wood

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

## Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

President: Sid Parker  
Vice-President: Cindy Mason-Purdie  
Recording Secy: Barbara Perry-Silva  
Treasurer: Charlene Canale  
Asst. Treasurer: Pat Parker  
Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt

Librarian: Rev. Norman Goos  
Assistant Librarian: Kathy Fritz  
Curator: Joan Frankel  
Asst. Curator: Kevin Little  
Chaplain: Rev. Norman Goos

Trustees: Ben Brenner, Mike Connor,  
Megan Ernst, Tom Kinsella,  
James H. Mason, V, Mike O'Brien,  
Heather Perez, Will Rozell,  
Judith Schwartz, Dana Shupp,  
Lynn Wood, Diane Bassetti, *Historian*



## ANNUAL ELECTIONS

The ACHS Annual Luncheon was held on Saturday, October 15, 2022 at the Crab Trap Restaurant in Somers Point. Board Members were sworn in and the *Bringing History to Life* award was presented. (See below)  
Top Left: Sheryl Collins, Joan Frankel & Lynn Wood greeting guests at the Annual Luncheon.

Top Right: Board Members and Officers being sworn in (L-R) Will Rozell, Megan Ernst, Kathy Fritz – *Asst. Librarian*, Ben Brenner, Lynn Wood, Joan Frankel – *Curator* & Cindy Mason-Purdie – *Vice President*.

Absent: Charlene Canale – *Treasurer* & Ellen Hyatt – *Financial Secretary*.

Bottom Left: ACHS President Sid Parker presenting the *Bringing History to Life* award to Tom Born, VHP Chairman.

Bottom Right: AC Press Meteorologist Joe Martucci makes a presentation on climate change and its influence on hurricanes and their paths.



Risley Homestead  
Yard Sale



**SOMERS POINT: GIANT BOOK SALE**  
At. Co. Historical Society  
907 Shore Road.  
Saturday, August 27th, 10a-2p.



Happy Book Sale  
customers at left  
and happy board  
members Sid &  
Babs, below!



Above: Lynn Wood,  
trustee and inven-  
tory control special-  
ist, working for the  
August book sale.

# Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

## Nuncupative Will of Jeremiah Risley, Jr. 1734 -1796

*Editor's Note: This document is a genealogist's goldmine. It not only gives the information one would hope to find in a will, such as names, places and dates, but because it was given verbally, it also relates the conditions under which it was created – while Jeremiah Risley, Jr. was at work, away from home and in extreme physical distress two hours before his death.*

*Although no year is mentioned in the will, from Jeremiah's date of death, it is inferred that it was created in 1796<sup>i</sup> giving all to his youngest son, Edward. It makes no mention, however, that Jeremiah Risley was a patriot of the American Revolution where he served as 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in Captain Covenover's Co., Third Battalion, Gloucester County Militia, Sept. 18, 1777.<sup>ii</sup>*

*Though much of the document's colloquial spelling has been retained, it has been shortened for length and clarity. The complete, 6-page, typed copy is housed in the ACHS vault, Sarah A. Risley Collection, folder 67, pages 10-14.*

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Be it known unto all men to whom these presents shall come, that we and each of us severally, the subscribing witnesses hereunto and whose names are hereinafter cited and recited do... by these presents declare over, pronounce and say that the following was and the words hereinafter cited and recited were the last verbal declaration and nuncupative will of Jeremiah Risley, late of Great Egg Harbor, in the County of Gloucester, State of New Jersey, Husbandmen<sup>iii</sup>, who departed this life on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June inst, at six o'clock P.M. and which verbal declaration was spoken with an interest to devise and bequeath and not as any loose or idle discourse to or held with the standers by such nuncupative will, being published and made known two hours before his decease, he the said Jeremiah the testator being of sound mind and perfect memory, but of body weak and infirm and then in extremis.

Whereas the said Jeremiah Risley deceased, on the morning of Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June inst was in sound and perfect health, and in the pursuing of his manual labors and daily occupation necessitated and did go to some distance from his house and place of residence or homestall, and whilst actually laboring was taken suddenly, instantly and violently sick, and seized with many greivous and accute pains inso much as to render him utterly incapable and unable to be carried or under go a removal to his own house and homestall, and was then taken and carried and removed to the nearest inhabited dwelling-house namely the house occupied by Conrad Herman being the most contiguous and immediately adjacent to where the said Jeremiah was so seized with pain and taken sick...and he the said Jeremiah deceased was by his friends, relatives and next to kin ministered unto and attended during the whole time of his sickness, even unto his death at which particular time and for the whole day previous thereto, each and every of the following persons were in the testators room where he lay awaiting his dissolution, - To Wit: - William Hackett, Sarah Read, Sarah McClean, Dinah DeLancy, Jemima Hawkins and Rebecca Herman, all of whom being consoling, ministering and preparing him for his awful approaching dissolution, did hear him make, ordain, constitute, direct, declare, say and pronounce his verbal or nuncupative will in manner and form following:-

To Wit:- After some time spent in prayer he the said testator being then of sound mind and perfect memory and observing his sisters he appeared extremely anxious and desirous to communicate with or disclose to them his will and intention respecting the disposition of all his worldly estate and temporal concerns, and they the aforesaid persons having at the said deceased Jeremiah's request (signified to William Hackett) joined him in prayer for some time and having made an end thereof the aforesaid William Hackett seated himself by the testator (then in extremis) on the bed and heard the testator signify to Sarah Read (widow) and sister to the aforesaid Jeremiah (once and for all the testator herein mentioned) on her addressing him the testator that his son Edward Risley should have, hold and exhibit to him said Edward, his Heirs and Assigns, in fee all and singular the homestead plantation with all the real and personal estate thereunto belonging or appertaining and the aforesaid Hackett says such signifacations was not by signs or guestors or by ambiguous or circumlocutive expressions, but by immediate express and explicit declarations made at divers times and the aforesaid Sarah Read, says that she addressed herself to testator to know with whom he would will the Homestead or Plantation whereon he resided and the more assuredly to ascertain whom or which of his children he would constitute and

*Continued on page 6*

## Looking Back through the Files.....continued

appoint his Heir to the above said Planation and Chattels...several times the testator by full express and explicit declarations did devise to his son Risley, called Edward by name of baptism, he being youngest son...the said Jeremiah Risley deceased having had issue three children at the time of his decease: - 'TO WIT', Nathaniel & Sarah, both of whom have been married and fully advanced during the life time of their father, 'TO WIT', on their respective days of marrying and at divers and many times since...they were and have been advanced...their reasonable parts of personal and real estate. Edward the devisee herein mentioned...as yet unmarried now aged 27 years and having continued with his father until now, doing and laboring as required by his father the testator...who bequeathed...unto said Edward, his Heirs and Assigns forever, as his the said Edward reasonable part of the testators real and personal estate as well as a recompense for his labor and services personally rendered for and during the above space of time mentioned.

Jemima Hawkins sister by one half blood to the testator...declares, avers and says that all every part and parcel of the devise, so made and is the same identical as declared published and pronounced by the testator in extremist...and that he told her that he had fully advanced his oldest Son (Nathaniel by name) both in land and personal estate, and that he would give him no more...Viz - The aforementioned and cited William Hackett (yeoman)<sup>iv</sup>, Sarah Reed (widow) and sister of the deceased testator, Jemima Hawkins (feme-covert)<sup>v</sup> and sister by ½ blood to the testator, as also Dinah Delancy (feme-covert), Sarah McClean, and Rebecca Herman (feme-covert)....

They and each of them do stand entirely deserted, totally indifferent and divest of any prejudice, so ever and in every manner and wise disinterested and indifferent, they or any or either of them, neither being debtors, creditors nor legatees...declare all and singular, each and every several part of the foregoing recital and relation to be the truth and nothing but the true nuncupative will in matter and substance, as times declared, published, promised and spoken, not as an idle discourse, but a full and final determination to devise and bequeath to his son Edward, in manner and form, matter and substance, as before at large recited and related and they the afore mentioned persons (witnesses)...have read or heard read the nuncupative [sic] will and verbal testimony of Jeremiah Risley...and \_\_\_\_\_ is reduced into writing in true legal manner and form, as disclosed and proscribed by statute of will, and that the Jeremiah, deceased, did devise unto his youngest son, named Edward as before mentioned, all and singular the Homestead or plantation whereon he resided: 'TO WIT', The plantation purchased from and for a good consideration, granted and given by Jeremiah Risley, to his son J. then generally known as Jr. and the testator herein mentioned as by deed bearing date \_\_\_\_\_ A.D. 1-- , said tract of land and plantation containing One hundred acres, be it more or less<sup>vi</sup>...The said Jeremiah the testator did give and bequeath and devise unto the aforesaid Edward, his Heirs and Assigns forever, and all, each and every of them the aforementioned.

Jeremiah Risley.

### Witnesses.

Jemima Hawkins

her

Dinah X DeLancy

mark

Sarah McClean, X, her mark.

Rebecca Herman, X, her mark

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<sup>i</sup> Risley, Agnes F. (Leeds), *ACHS Bible and Family Records, Vol. IX*, Feb. 1929, p. 88, "Jeremiah Risley was born December the 14 day 1734" and p. 89 [though incorrectly numbered 98], "Jeremiah Risley deceased the 24 day of June 1796."

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid. p. 90

<sup>iii</sup> Husbandman - one that plows and cultivates land, a farmer, [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com).

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid. Yeoman - a person who owns and cultivates a small farm.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid. Feme Covert - a married woman.

<sup>vi</sup> A typed copy of this deed, Jeremiah Risley, Sr. to Jeremiah Risley, Jr., 1767, 100 acres, Great Egg Harbor, is housed in the ACHS Vault, Genealogy File 67, pages 15-18, Sarah A. Risley Collection. "This Indenture made the Fifth day of November in the Year or our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty Seven, Between Jeremiah Risley Sr. of the Township of Great Egg Harbor...of the one part, and Jeremiah Risley Jr. Son of the said Jeremiah Risley Sr. of the same place of the other part...One hundred Acres of land and Marsh Situated Lying and Being on Great Egg Harbor above and being the same One Hundred Acres that the Said Jeremiah Risley Sr. Purchased of Samuel Gale by Deed Dated the Fifth day of September, One Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty Four, Being part of the Two Hundred and Fifty acres that the Said Saml Gale Purchased of Richard Valentine."





## Spotlight on the Shelves

*a treasure hiding in plain sight...*

By Brittani Mazzone

*"It's our salary, the edible rock,  
the bit of earth we eat each day  
to teach us how forever tastes."*

- David Citino

During the birth of America, settlers of Colonial New Jersey had no reliable access to salt supply and had to rely on imports or trade. This problem worsened with the British blockade, cutting off salt supply to New Jersey completely. As an important mineral in terms of food preservation, salt was necessary and so became the saltworks along the coast of New Jersey. *The Revolutionary Saltworks of the New Jersey Coast* (B-1457, Weiss), details the process of establishing these manufacturers, beginning with a Congress resolution dated December 29, 1775. A list of proposed saltworks sites were provided including Leeds, Absecon Island near Atlantic City (including Holgate and Little Beach). Although we know the most information about the Pennsylvania Saltworks, the first entry in those records mention the order of lumber, tools, and bricks from Egg Harbor. Works in the neighborhood of Atlantic City went on for a number of years but were strictly local operations. Anymore, these saltworks have been largely abandoned, with residents in the areas reminiscing about going duck-hunting on the "saltpond" but nothing more. Today, these lands are preserved and contain vulnerable plant-types and bird species native to the area.

### ***Correction from last Newsletter...***

***Then & Now:*** 200th Anniversary of the brick  
Zion Methodist Church, 1822-2022

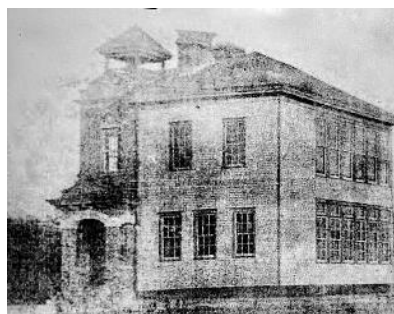
The early Blackman Meeting House, a small cedar planked structure built circa 1764 on Andrew Blackman's land was being used by Presbyterian worshipers until Methodist preachers riding through the area converted worshipers to their faith. Trustees for the Methodist Society were elected October 23, 1814. The building soon became too small for the growing congregation. A larger brick "Zion Methodist Episcopal Church" was completed 200 years ago...in 1822. The wood from the original meeting house was used to build a shelter for the horses of travelers who came in their buggies from as far as 20 miles away. Additions were made through the years but the interior remains the same as it was 200 years ago. This is a reminder of Egg Harbor Township's deep religious history.

## Then & Now!

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

In circa 1899, the area of Cardiff in Egg Harbor Township, (once called Idlewood) had grown enough to warrant the building of a school. Located on Spruce Avenue, it held two classrooms, a community meeting room upstairs, an outhouse in the back and it had a hand pump by the back shed for drinking water. Each room was heated with a pot-bellied stove.

In 1922, a four classroom brick addition was added. In the 1940s the school became the township's junior high school with 7th and 8th grades. Later, in the 1950s, it changed again to teach 4th to 6th grades. The school closed its doors to students in 1992 when larger schools were built. Today it houses the Family Success Center.



**Circa  
1900**



**Circa  
1922**



**Today... Family Success Center**

**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**



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**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.