

# ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

SPRING 2025

## A CAMP BOARDWALK AIRMAN'S MEMOIR

*Edited by Michael Connor*

*Editor's Note: While doing follow-up research to an earlier article on Camp Boardwalk I found in our vertical files a handwritten memoir by Fred J. Earhart detailing his World War II service. Fred was a very active member of the Atlantic County Historical Society and served as Trustee and Museum Curator. He came to Atlantic City as part of the initial intake to Camp Boardwalk. Here with some editing is his story:*

I was drafted into the U.S. Army in June, 1942, as a single 26 year old street-wise New Yorker. Giving up my responsibilities as a chain-store manager and accepting the all-encompassing hospitality of the Army was easy. With some trepidation I was looking forward to this new adventure and the prospect of chasing girls without having to make any commitments.

In early July, 1942, I was assigned to the Army Air Corps (later Army Air Force). From a processing center on Long Island (Camp Upton) we boarded a troop train to a then unknown basic training destination where I began my love affair of 58 years with Atlantic City.

At that time all I knew about Atlantic City was the big dance bands playing on the radio from the Steel and Million Dollar Piers. Around Labor Day of each year our NYC tabloids featured an Atlantic City bathing beauty on their front pages. Miss America was just another skin contest. I never knew there was a boardwalk or that there were many large first-class hotels or that Convention Hall was so large it was named "The Eighth Wonder of the World."

After our troop train arrived at Union Station on Arctic Ave. we marched to the Boardwalk at Arkansas Ave. The city was mobbed with tourists. We raw recruits were applauded and cheered as if we had just come back from winning the war. We were the first group of trainees.

We then arrived at the massive Convention Hall where we had a "short" physical inspection on the big stage where the Pageant is held. From there we marched up to the Traymore Hotel. Little did I know that this would become my home for the next fourteen months as a staff member of the 705th training squadron. *Editor's note: It was typical for better trainees to be kept as part of a newly formed training cadre. In contrast to his fellow teenage trainees, Fred's maturity and business experience probably led to his selection.*

I went AWOL from the Traymore on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Instead of my original plan to hitchhike to NYC, I went to the big USO holiday dance at the Atlantic City High School gym. On that same day I there met the love of my life.

In May of 1943 the permanent party staff moved the entire Army Air Corps Basic Training Center #7 from Atlantic City to Seymour Johnson Field at Goldsboro, NC, where the Rebs had sold a big swampy tract to the Yankees for an air base. It was very hot and humid and they were still fighting the Civil War. Only one bar in town at the King Cotton Hotel was not off limits. It seemed odd that they always ran out of 3.2 beer soon after we were released from duty at the base.

*continued on page 4*

# 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 Saturday & Sunday for individual and small group guided tours. Contact ACHS for details about large groups.

## Then & Now!

By Lynn Wood

*Then & Now* is a regular feature in our Newsletter, featuring photos from the ACHS collection.

### Germania Farm School

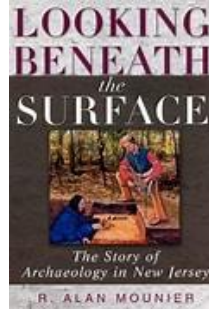


Early photo of the Germania Farm School in Galloway at Moss Mill and Liebig Streets. The school was built circa 1864 and was destroyed in a fire in 1909. After the second school closed in 1930, it was bought by the Germania Gunning Club and they still use it as a hunting club today.

First building: 1864-1909... Second building: 1909-1930. Students attended the new Cologne School when this school closed in 1930.

The bell from the original school was purchased from a company in New York and came by railroad to Egg Harbor City. This was a big event for the community. When it arrived in March of 1864, it was put on a wagon and pulled by twelve oxen draped in flowers and palm leaves. Six young girls dressed in white waving flags sat around the bell on its journey to the school house. About a thousand people came to witness the christening of the bell for the little school house, which was amazing for that time of slow travel and scattered settlements. The bell has been saved and remains on display today.

*(Information from "The Egg Harbor Pilot", an early weekly newspaper)  
Thank you Sarah Snow.*



Monday, March 17, 2025, 6:30pm  
Atlantic County Historical Society  
*Looking beneath the Surface*

Author R. Alan Mounier will present a look at the human past of New Jersey. With focus on the ancient past and native cultures, the author will detail the story of archaeology in the state as it has unfolded, and as it continues to unfold.

Monday, April 7, 2025, 6:30pm  
Atlantic County Historical Society

Rob Patrick presents *"Brick Works"*

From Somers Brick Works in 1847 to Birch Grove Park in 1952. Learn about how the 21 ponds/lakes were formed and how and why this area was suitable for brickmaking.

Saturday, April 26, 2025, EARTH DAY

ACUA, 6700 Deliliah Rd., Egg Harbor Twp. 10:0am – 4:00pm  
ACHS will have a table at the annual event. The Veterans History Project will be looking for veterans to interview. ACHS will be offering children's activities.

Sunday, March 30, 2025, 2:00pm  
@Atlantic County Historical Society

Sunday, April 6, 2025, 2:00pm  
@ Canoe Club, 100 Sports Drive, Hammonton  
Atlantic County History Roundtable

Free presentation and exhibit on "Houses of Worship in Old Atlantic County."



Monday, May 19, 2025, 6:30 pm.  
Atlantic County Historical Society

Several local authors on history & photography will participate. Books available for purchase. Refreshments will be served.

Monday, June 16, 2025, 6:30pm  
Atlantic County Historical Society

*CHICKEN BONE BEACH* Co-authors, Henrietta Shelton – an Atlantic City native & President of the Chicken Bone Beach Historical Foundation and Heather Perez, Stockton University Special Collections Librarian & ACHS Board Member, will present their book, co-written with Ronald J. Stephens, which covers Atlantic City's *Chicken Bone Beach*, the Northside neighborhood and more.



# Member News



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

Frances Brewin, Steve Jasiiecki, Paul Schopp

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

Antique Collectors Club,  
Charlie & Colleen Morgan

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

Jim & Lucille Leeds,  
Alan Kligerman (AkPharma Inc)

Another successful Holiday Sweet Sale at  
the Atlantic County Historical Society~  
Saturday December 21, 2024.

*Thank you to all the volunteer bakers!!  
And thank you to all those who came out!*



## Yard Sale

Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>  
8:00am – 2:00pm  
(Rain date, June 8<sup>th</sup>)

Many items for sale,  
including extra Library  
books.

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



**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

907 Shore Road  
Somers Point

Saturdays:  
**JULY 19<sup>th</sup> &  
AUGUST 16<sup>th</sup>**  
*Inside & outside ACHS.*

## IN MEMORIAM



Carolyn Adams Patterson

Bertie Sheridan, *Long-time volunteer & member*

The Atlantic County Historical Society  
will be closed

Friday & Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>

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



*Photos by Lynn Wood*

## Ehrhardt *continued...*

Our mission at Goldsboro changed in 1944 when our group became an Overseas Replacement Depot. We soon moved it to Greensboro, NC, a much larger town. We were still the same group which had left Atlantic City. In March of 1944 I married my one and only Betty Skean at her family's apartment in Manhattan. There was only one place to spend our short honeymoon ... Atlantic City! We stayed at 8 South Pembroke, the Skean home in Margate but most nights we were dancing at the Claridge! It was no longer an army barracks.

At Greensboro Betty joined me. We illegally lived off base in a small southern mansion converted to rooming house. The landlady flew the Confederate flag. Rentals were in short supply. A friend had warned us that we would be quickly evicted if we talked about the Civil War ... "and always accept the landlady's invitation to play croquet. Let her win because she loves beating Yankees."

Well, Betty forgot the warning and we were given a week's notice. I don't know how she did it but Betty found a small apartment in a converted stable on the large estate of a textile magnate. This was our first "honeymoon cottage" and we loved it. It was sparsely furnished with a bed, table, chairs and a sofa. We added orange crates for which Betty sewed fabric covers. There was one problem ... bugs. I came home one night to find her standing on a chair surrounded by dozens of 2" long woods roaches. They did not survive my rescue attack!

In November of 1944 we closed the Greensboro base and were re-assigned to the India-China Division of the army's Air Transport Command. There is a secret that I've kept from my wife of 56 years - - - I could have had my name removed from the shipping list but I really wanted to serve overseas. Later in India we learned that those who got off the list were transferred to the infantry and shipped to the Pacific. *Editor's note: Many other Air Force personnel found themselves surplus to needs and were reassigned as infantry to replace combat losses in Europe. Infantrymen were in short supply.*

While preparing for the India voyage I tried to think of some way to help Betty sort of accept my absence. I would want to tell her my exact location but the censors would cut that. Finally, I came up with a secret code. We bought two identical large scale maps of the China-Burma-India region and marked each with a grid of one inch squares. Each column at the top listed the name of a book and each row across was the name of an author. When a group of us were flown to Yunmanyi, China, from Kuming, I wrote to her "Just began reading 'Taming of the Shrew' by Zane Grey." This meant I had just arrived at the conjunction of those coordinates which she could plot on her map and see that I was in south-western China near Burma and the famous Ledo Road. The censors never figured out that the authors and titles were unrelated.

### **Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board**

President: Sid Parker

Vice-President: Cindy Mason-Purdie

Recording Secy: Barbara Perry-Silva

Treasurer: Charlene Canale

Asst. Treasurer: (vacant)

Financial Secretary: Ellen Hyatt

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Assistant Librarian: Kathy Fritz

Curator: Joan Frankel

Asst. Curator: Kevin Little

Chaplain: Rev. Norman Goos

Historian: Diane Bassetti

.....

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



*From the ACHS –  
"Warrington" collection:*  
This photo, which appeared in the Atlantic City Press after an Easter snowstorm that hit South Jersey communities particularly hard in 1958, shows a woman trudging through the snow, carrying a kerosene can, on Shore Road in Somers Point.



## Ehrhardt *continued...*

On December 31, 1944, our large troopship “General Mitchell” left Hampton Roads at Norfolk, VA, on an unescorted 21-day voyage to Bombay. As we cleared the pier, the dockside army band was playing the Princeton fight song “Hold That Tiger!” From Bombay it was a 6-day train trip all the way across India to its northeastern border with China in the Assam Valley. At intervals I was transferred to about six different satellite airbases in this valley along the border with Burma up from Calcutta. My favorite base was Shillong, a historic British Army luxury rest camp high in the Khasi Mountains. The Khasi tribe here was matriarch dominated. The Eurasian girls in town were lovely and friendly. We had one light snowfall which made us homesick.

Eventually I collected enough battle stars and separation points to be on my way home. This time I flew west across India to Karachi on the northern Arabian Sea. We waited an agonizing three weeks to get on a troopship. It was the luxury cruise ship SS Santa Clara. Wow! We were assigned to staterooms each with its own latrine!

At 3:00 am in January, 1946, we lined the ship’s rails to see the Statue of Liberty. *Editor’s note: Fred has now circled the globe during the course of his Air Force service.* The Lady in the Harbor was a welcome sight but it couldn’t compare to the thrill of once more being in the loving embrace of my one and only Betty a week later at Fort Monmouth!!!

## EPILOGUE

Heroes? I doubt that there were more than just a few in the entire global Air Transport Command. For each GI involved in enemy action there were eight men supporting him behind the lines or at the tactical airbases. I was one of them, never a hero.

My 42 months in uniform were without a doubt a unique learning experience. If nothing else I learned to appreciate each guy around me as a person and to get along with the SOBs. I truly liked the Indian People ... mostly the Bengalis who were totally honest!

*Editor’s note: Fred and Betty returned to Atlantic County and raised two sons. My wife, Brooke, baby sat for both of them. They initially made their home in Margate and ultimately in Absecon. Fred managed the Atlantic City Convention Bureau. Both were active in the Atlantic County Historical Society and the Antique Collectors Club. Fred dated his hand-written memoir August 22, 2000.*

### Need to Contact Us?

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

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& Lynn Wood,

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

## Looking Back through the Files..... PHOTOS



FORT ISLAND CHESTNUT NJ



Top-left: Postcard, Chestnut Neck, Fort Island, site of old fort; ACHS photo file #811

Top-right: Johnson-Bell House, ACHS photo file #1879



Bottom: Unveiling of Chestnut Neck Monument, Oct. 6, 1911. Erected by the General Lafayette Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution to honor the heroic men who defended Chestnut Neck, it is topped by a Minute Man who faces the Mullica River, forever guarding the coast from the enemy; ACHS photo file #811

# Looking Back through the Files.....

Transcribed by Diane J. Miller

## Colonial Atlantic County

by

Georgiana C. Blake [1872-1953]

Read at County Institute, Atlantic City, October 1932

*This transcription begins on page 12 of a 22-page typescript found in ACHS Collection Box 20A, folder 13, Blake-Smick Collection.*

*This was chosen as the starting point to focus on the Battle of Chestnut Neck (located in present day Port Republic.) Mrs. Blake, who recalls this history as someone who "was born and reared on Chestnut Neck," describes it as the one recorded battle of the Revolutionary War which took place in what is now Atlantic County. A more complete picture of activity can be found in a book by David C. Munn, Battles and Skirmishes in New Jersey of the American Revolution, found at ACHS, Call No. B2263.*

*Brackets appearing throughout were added by this transcriber.*

...By 1776 Chestnut Neck had become an important little town.<sup>i</sup> It was the trading center for that section. Vessels sailed regularly to New York and to more distant ports, taking out native products and bringing back needed supplies, and many seeming luxuries. Pieces of rare and beautiful china are still treasured in some families, because brought back by an ancestor from a foreign shore...Cedar from the banks of the Mullica went into some of New York's best homes. Tradition tells of boisterous scenes in old Payne's Tavern at Chestnut Neck where men and crews from the vessels gathered....

When the war came, Chestnut Neck became the rendezvous of the privateersmen.<sup>ii</sup> Here they brought their captured vessels; and here the cargoes were unloaded, and supplies for the American army loaded in flatboats, taken up the [Mullica] river [then known as Little Egg Harbor River] to "The Forks" and carted across the state, thence to Washington's army. Col. Elijah Clark and Col. Richard Westcott built a fort here at their own personal expense. They were afterward reimbursed by the Colonial Legislature to the amount of four hundred and thirty pounds, one shilling and three pence. For a time the fort was garrisoned and protected with cannon...But it soon became necessary to send both men and cannon where they were more needed.<sup>iii</sup> This fort stood at what was later locally called Fort Island. The records refer to it as being at "Fox Burrows", a rise of ground where the bungalow built by the late Judge William C. French now stands [1932].

With both New York and Philadelphia in the control of the British, Washington's source of supplies was cut off. Supplies were then brought into Little Egg Harbor...Two large store houses [some sources say three] were built at Chestnut Neck along the river bank below the present bridge [1932] across the Mullica River....

The one recorded battle of the Revolutionary War in what is now Atlantic County, was at Chestnut Neck. The privateersmen had become so successful in capturing British ships that Sir Henry Clinton sent a fleet of ships from New York to "clean out that nest of Rebel Pirates." His object was also to destroy the iron works at Batsto and the various salt works. These iron works were supplying the American Army with cannon and balls. Nine armed vessels sailed from New York under Capt. Henry Collins (This Capt. Collins is not connected with any Atlantic County families of Collins' in any way) with a detail of 300 men. They sailed September 30, 1778, but bad weather delayed their arrival until October 5. The sailing of this fleet had been made known to General Washington, and he dispatched Count Pulaski and his Legion to Chestnut Neck. Count Pulaski, however, did not arrive until the morning after the battle. [Some sources say it was later.]

Captain Collins could not get his ship up the river because of the weather. He therefore filled galleys and armed boats with men and artillery, and came up the river in all haste, on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>. He arrived at Chestnut Neck in a dense fog about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon [the time is a handwritten addition to the typescript]<sup>iv</sup>, and landed under the protection of fire from their armed galleys. The American troops that could be mustered made a gallant defense, and held the British back until the women and children escaped to the nearby forest, then they retreated to the forest, firing as they went...the Patriots had nothing with which to fight except their muskets.

The fort was demolished, the storehouses and the village plundered and then burned.<sup>v</sup> The privateers having been warned had put out to sea, so none of them were captured...Capt. Collins in his report says there were some ten vessels there, mostly British which had been captured by the privateers, and dismantled. It was

*Continued on page 7*

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

impossible for him to get them away, therefore he had ordered them burned and destroyed. Among these were two large British merchant ships, the "Venus", and the "Major Pearson". The Venus had been captured and brought in by Capt. Micajah Smith of the privateer sloop "Sly". He was the Micajah Smith having his mills at what is now Port Republic. A portion of the timbers of the "Venus" may still be seen [1932] at a very low tide and with a strong North west wind.

The British were not successful in reaching the Forks. Their work of plunder and destruction completed at Chestnut Neck, they returned the following day to their ships off Tuckerton, stopping on the way to burn the salt works, saw mills, home and barn of the Quaker patriot, Eli Mathis.

When Pulaski arrived at Chestnut Neck, he found the village a mass of ashes...He...hastened to Tuckerton, where he and the British watched each other until October 15, when a detachment of his men on outpost duty under Colonel Baron de Bosen, was surprised by 200 men from the British ships and killed. It is said that only five prisoners were taken out of the fifty men. It is claimed the order of "no quarter" had been given by the British. This is known as the "Massacre of Little Egg Harbor", and the site is marked by a tablet placed by the Society of the Cincinnati. The British succeeded in reaching their boats before the main body of Pulaski's men could reach them. They then sailed back to New York....

Tradition tells us that the older men at Chestnut Neck (No man over fifty was supposed to serve in the regular army) had organized themselves into a company under one Captain Johnson, and that they drilled regularly and that they helped to defend Chestnut Neck, at the time of the Battle there. There is no record of this company other than tradition. I was born and reared on Chestnut Neck, and have heard this company talked of and praised for their bravery since my earliest memory....

Chestnut Neck was not rebuilt; the people deemed it too exposed to be safe. They built the best sort of homes they could under the circumstances at what is now Port Republic. Remember this was October. Their homes had been burned and all their possessions stolen or destroyed. Winter was coming on, and no provision for food or clothing or the necessary comforts of life could be made. The younger men were away in the army. Tradition says that the house of Benjamin Endicott was the first one built. This stood on the site of the present Methodist Episcopal parsonage, and a portion of it is built into this parsonage [1932].

Benjamin Endicott was taken prisoner during the war, and confined in that den of horrors, the prison ship in New York Harbor. Tradition says he escaped, but records show he was exchanged.<sup>vi</sup> He made his way on foot, through a New Jersey infested with British and Tories, to his home in Port Republic, where he called to his family from the woods back of his house. The houses were all built along a narrow road (now Main Street) facing the creek...He told them not to come near him or touch him, but to bring him soap and water and clean clothing, and a spade. This they did; he bathed, put on clean clothing, and buried his filthy, vermin-infested rags. Then he rejoined his family. This is but one of the traditions handed down....

<sup>i</sup> Chestnut Neck was so named because of a clump of large chestnut trees standing near the point; M. C. Thomas, "When British Troops Burned Chestnut Neck," *Atlantic City Press*, April 3, 1938, p 1; found at ACHS, WPA Papers – Wars, Revolutionary.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid; "Owing to the lack of a navy, Continental America gave 'Letters of Marque' to privately owned vessels, called Privateers, which constituted a most important part of the naval program." Thus they were authorized to prey on British shipping, protect our supply ships from British privateers, and prevent refugees from landing on our shores.

<sup>iii</sup> A 1777 entry in the Town Book of Great Egg Harbor shows a debt to Richard Somers: "Feb. 15 To hauling guns from Chestnut Neck, by Scull and Steelman....3 Lbs. 15 s. 0 d." This entry "might explain why there were no guns to defend Fort Fox Burrows at the Battle of Chestnut Neck when the British attacked on October 6, 1778."; Sarah W. R. Ewing, "Atlantic County during the American Revolution," *Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 31.

<sup>iv</sup> The time of 4 p.m. and other facts related here agree with those recorded in a letter written Oct. 9, 1778 by Henry Collins while onboard the ship Zebra in Little Egg Harbor; letter transcribed in 2008 by Richard Henkels is in this transcriber's possession.

<sup>v</sup> According to Olive Conover Rundstrom, the Johnson House, (sometimes called the Johnson-Bell House) was the only house not burned by the British during the Battle of Chestnut Neck. At the time of the Revolutionary War, it was occupied by widow Sarah Johnson and her daughter, Michael Johnson. "It is said that a British officer lived in this house during the time (October 5, 1778 to October 15, 1778) the British ships were in the Mullica River at Chestnut Neck, and the widow Johnson prepared meals for the British officers. Thus, her home was spared..." James Bell of Maryland, a member of Count Pulaski's Legion which arrived too late to take part in the Battle of Chestnut Neck, later married Michael Johnson on Jan. 11, 1783. They lived in this house; Rundstrom, "Johnson House," *Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 54.

<sup>vi</sup> A transcribed copy of a certification from the Adjutant General, State of New Jersey, April 13, 1926, states that Benjamin Endicott "was a private, Col. Richard Somers' Third Regiment, Gloucester County New Jersey Militia, 1778; was in engagement at Coopers Ferry, NJ, April 5, 1778, when he was taken prisoner; confined in New York until July 20, 1778, when he was exchanged, during the Revolutionary War." Collection Box 3B, folder 14c, Marjorie K. Cramer Collection.

**SEE ASSOCIATED PHOTOS ON PAGE 5**

**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
HISTORICAL  
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**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
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*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.