

Salem County Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

Featuring Elsinboro Township

VOL. XXXVII

MARCH 1992

NO. 1

Quarterly Meeting

"CANALS, THEIR HISTORY AND INFLUENCE ON CULTURE AND ECONOMICS" will be the topic at the March 8th Quarterly Meeting. Brian Kutner, D.M.D., will present this slide/lecture program at 1:30 P.M. in St. John's Parish House, corner of Market and Grant Streets, Salem.

Dr. Kutner is a native of Millville, New Jersey. He graduated from Fairleigh Dickinson University with a bachelor of science in biology in 1976 and the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine in 1980. Since 1982 he has had a general dentistry practice in Millville.

What started in 1980 as a hike along the old Morris Canal in Northern New Jersey has blossomed into a passionate hobby that combined Dr. Kutner's photographic pursuits with research and travel. To date, he has photographed canals in Canada, England and 25 of the states in the U.S. In 1988 he expanded his area of study to Roman aqueducts, which he then photographed in France, Spain and Italy.

The program will provide an excellent insight into the dependency that our forefathers had on water for both power and transportation. Please plan to attend and bring a friend. The program is open to the public. Following the presentation, there will be refreshments at the Society's Alexander Grant House, where Dr. Kutner will be available for questions and discussion.

Robert Gibbon Johnson Book becomes a limited cloth edition

Sufficient requests were received to have thirty copies of Robert G. Johnson's book, *An Historical Account of the First Settlement of Salem*, made up with hard backs. The book was first published in Philadelphia in 1839. Each book of this limited cloth edition is numbered and each purchaser will be registered at the Society. There are a few books unsold as we go to press. The books are available at the Society, hard-bound at \$26.50 and soft-bound at \$11.30 postpaid.

Discover the whereabouts of the Jersey Devil in the feature article



Introduction to Elsinboro Township

S. Frank Powell, who was born and raised in Elsinboro Township and is still a resident there, is the guest author writing about his home township. Frank's family were Welsh Quakers who came to Philadelphia in 1683 from near Bala, Wales, and purchased land in the Welsh Tract from William Penn. In 1700 they acquired land in Lower Alloway's Creek, which is still owned by the family. In 1830 the family removed to Elsinboro. A former farmer, Frank is employed by the Nuclear Division of the Raytheon Corporation, and his wife, Jean, is a school teacher in Elsinboro. They have three children, two living in Salem County and one living in Virginia.

His article begins on page 3.

Membership report

NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

- Ms Arline Boyce Margate
- Miss Mary Willson Hilliard Lexington, VA
- Mr. & Mrs. David L. Saul Pennsville
- Mr. Paul W. Boinske Salem
- Mr. Edward R. Rogers Pennsville
- Mr. John C. Leach Pitman
- Mrs. D. Stratton Woodruff, Jr. Bryn Mawr, PA
- Mr. T. S. Francis Carney's Point
- Dr. Susan Dion Carney's Point
- Mr. Laurence Van Meter Greenwich
- Ms Nadean S. Pedersen Alloway
- Mr. John B. Adams Chapel Hill, NC
- Mr. & Mrs. William Fogg Spangler Salem
- Mr. & Mrs. Don Hughes Millville
- Mr. Steven Pledger Cape Girardeau, MO
- Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Fox Woodstown
- Ms Lois M. Teer Camden
- Mr. Richard C. Buchan Chatsworth, CA
- Ms Cynthia A. Holubik Malvern, PA

NEW STUDENT MEMBERS

- Brett Dion-Krodel Carney's Point
- Raena Dion-Krodel Carney's Point

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

- Mr. Jeffrey E. Wood Manassas, VA
- Mr. David P. Souder Lenni, PA

NEW SUSTAINING MEMBERS

- Mrs. Wilbert R. Staub Salem
- Ms. Sandra M. Hewlett Wayne, PA
- Mr. G. Thomas Bowen Salem

REPEAT SUSTAINING MEMBERS

- Mrs. Henry Saletra Carneys Point
- Mrs. John F. Carpenter Pennsville
- Mr. Robert C. Butcher Salem
- Mr. Thomas H. Bowen Salem
- Mr. Millard I. Jackson, Jr. Rosemont, PA
- Mrs. Granville S. Thomas Salem
- Mr. & Mrs. C. Courtney Seabrook Woodstown
- Ms Marie W. Coleman Woodstown
- Mrs. Margaret T. Ward Montclair, CA

DECEASED

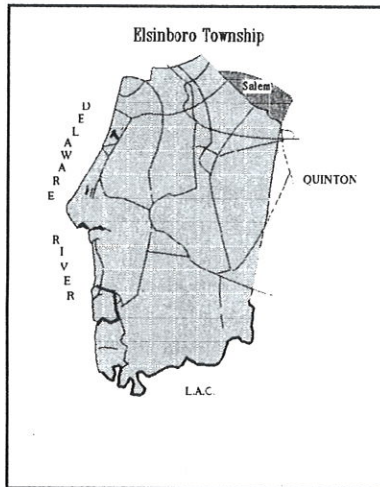
- Mr. George L. Hill Salem
- Mrs. Oakford W. Richman Woodstown
- Mr. Raymond G. Berry Wenonah
- Ms Pauline Kubicki Salem
- Mrs. William B. Dunn Casselberry, FL
- Miss Margaret E. Wilke Pennsville

ELSINBORO TOWNSHIP

By S. Frank Powell

The Indians called us Oitsessing, Wootsessungsing and Asamohaking. The Swedes called us Fort Nya Elfsborg, Elftsburg, Helsinborg, and Mugenborg (in honor of our mosquitoes). The British called us many things: Whigs, Rebels, Traitors, and they and the early settlers spelled it every way they could-Elsingborough, Elsinborough, Elenburgh, Elsinburg, Elfsboro, and, finally, Elsinboro. Whatever you call us, it's still the home of some 1200 residents who all live in the upper half of our township. The lower half we give to the geese, ducks, muskrats, and deer.

We are the first township and, for sure, the smallest. Hard to find? Not really.

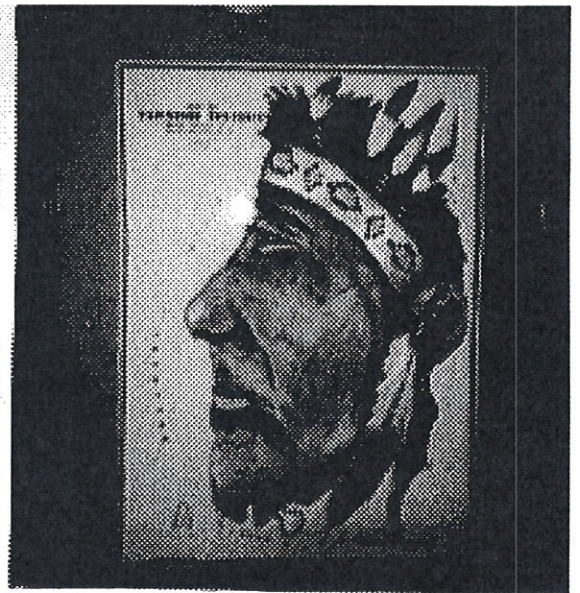


If you look at the map of Salem County, you will see our township is the one shaped like a man's head. Mr. and Mrs. H. Lee Lark, long-time residents of Elsinboro, found out who the man was. Their daughter and family presented them with a picture painted by Carolyn Mortimer, art teacher at Schalick High School. Mrs. Mortimer painted over the map of Elsinboro Township, and it turned out to be the old Indian Chief (Sachen) himself.

SETTLEMENTS AND POINTS OF INTEREST

Well, our trip has to have a starting point, and, since Elsinboro has no gas station, we will fill up in Salem, come out on the New Bridge Road, and just before we reach the

trailer court, there is a certain spot in the road where we can jump out and say hello to all our neighbors by reaching down and placing one hand in Quinton Township, the other hand in L.A.C., keep a foot in Elsinboro and put the other in Salem.



The first settlement we are going to visit is Dick Moore's Corner, named for Richard Moore, a man born in Maryland. He came to Salem in the early 1800's to work as a steward on the ships traveling from here to Philadelphia. Another thing about Moore's Corner is, aside from the early colonists worshipping in private homes, the only church we have ever had was formerly in this settlement. Across the road from Moore's Corner is one of the township's two fuel oil businesses, and with that sentence, I have covered "Corporate Elsinboro." We have several small businesses, two hands full of farmers, farming some 3% of the county's agriculture land, a few teachers, and a lot of hard-working housewives. Everyone else, including some of the housewives, leave out to work in the morning.

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A milestone for Broadway in Salem

On December 9, 1991, too late to announce in the December Newsletter, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Energy Assistant Commissioner Jim Hall signed the official document that placed the Broadway Historic District (from Front Street to Yorke Street) on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. The document was signed before local government officials, residents and merchants in the sanctuary of the Broadway United Methodist Church. The State Register is administered by the Office of New Jersey Heritage, Division of Parks and Forestry.

Now that Broadway is on the New Jersey registry, a recommendation will be made to the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, in Washington, D.C., to list it on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Broadway Historic District is eligible for listing in areas of architecture, community development and ethnic heritage. It encompasses 244 properties, 202 of which are considered to be historic resources that contribute the historic and architectural significance of the district. Broadway is comprised mainly of buildings built between 1820 and 1890, in styles such as Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Victorian Gothic Revival and Queen Anne.

New book available *Salem Quarter*

The *Salem Quarter* is a history of the Quakers, including Salem Quarterly Meeting and Southern New Jersey 1675-1990. The sub-title is *The Quakers of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Southern New Jersey from 1675 to 1990*. It was compiled by Salem Quarterly meeting and consists of 411 pages. The book is now on sale at the Society for \$19.00 plus postage of \$2.00 if ordered for mailing.

Elsinboro *Continued from Page 3*

Heading west on Amwellbury East, across the top of Elsinboro, or the start of Middle Neck, we cross Windy Corner into the oldest area of the township-Tilbury, Sinnickson's Landing, Varken's Kil (Salem Creek), site of a ferry service from Elsinboro to New Castle, Delaware, also the oldest settlement in Salem County. Some sixty English settlers came to Tilbury in August, 1641, as a result of a land purchase by Captain Nathaniel Turner, of the New Haven Colony, from a local Indian Chief (Sachen). This Indian was standing on the beach with his real estate book in his hand, for he also sold the same land to a man named George Lamberton and to the Swedes, and a few years later, he or his family sold it a fourth time to John Fenwick. Some of his descendants are still around the township, including this writer.

Traveling on down the Fort Elfsborg Road, we come to the heaviest-populated area in the township, The Cove, Oakwood Beach, and Fort Elfsborg. This is the site of our school, golf course, fire house and township building. There have been good stories written about Oakwood Beach and the old bath houses and the fact that years ago most of the houses were summer cottages; now most are year-round homes.

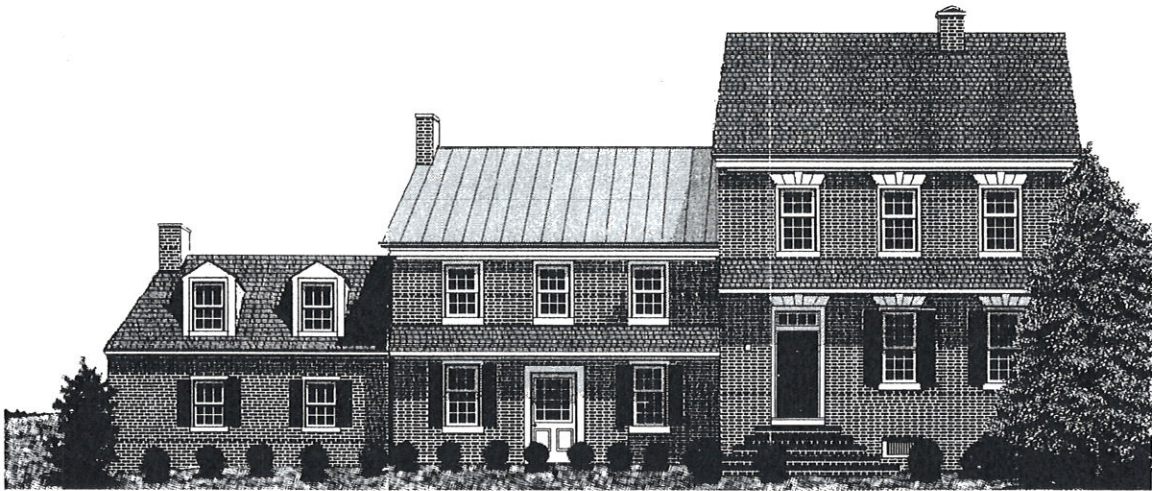
ELSINBORO POINT

If you research local history, you will see that everything seemed to happen on or near this point. The Swedes, Dutch, British, Colonists, and pirates anchored their ships here, and each generation seemed to give it a different name: Fort Point, Fishing Point, Mill Point, and, to speculate, an Indian village named Oitsessing. Fishing Point reportedly was named for a small fishing industry that flourished in the 1600's. Mill Point was a bit more substantial, for in the 1700's, a tide-water flour mill was owned and operated by a man named David Morris and later sold to the Holmes family. In the 1870's, my grandfather and great-grandfather, for whatever reason, decided that they wanted to find the mill stones from the old mill, and, after much poking around, located one of them. It took them the better part of a week to extract the stone from the mud. Whether they couldn't locate more than one or maybe they figured that was enough archaeology for one lifetime, I don't know. We still have the stone; the location of the mill was on the north side of Mill Ditch at the mouth. Today, the mill is in the ditch. Fort Point, of course, was named for Fort Nya Elfsborg, built by the Swedish Governor, John Printz, in 1643. In the 1930's, Professor Amandus Johnson of the University of Pennsylvania wrote two volumes entitled *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware*. In his writings, Professor Johnson stated the location of Fort Elfsborg was on the south side of Mill Ditch. If he had wanted to be more precise, he could have said on the south side at the mouth of the ditch. Today, its location is in the Delaware River.

COLONIAL HOMES

Elsinboro has some very beautiful colonial and federal period houses. The owners of these homes deserve a lot of credit for preserving that part of our early history. Holme Land is the most publicized of our colonial houses. It was built by Benjamin Holme, colonel of the militia in the Revolutionary War. The house was burned by the British and later rebuilt by the Holme family.

Just down the road from Holme Land is the Redroe Morris house owned by Mr. and Mrs. William Seddon, "newcomers" in the township. In the living room is a one-room log cabin that was the original house on the property. The dimension of the log cabin is 18' by 25'. A few years ago, a stone that was the doorstep of the cabin was found under the floor.



Holmeland

SCHOOLS

The first school in Elsinboro was built in 1702 on Pumpkin Hill in the upper part of the township near Featherbed Lane. The Union School or, as everyone called it, the Cocked Hat School was built about 1794. The name, Cocked Hat, was said to have come from an incident that occurred in Salem during the Lincoln campaign for President in 1864; the old timers say, "No!" The name came from a blacksmith's shop that was located on the corner of Amwellbury and the Fort Elfsborg-Hancock's Bridge Road. In front of the blacksmith's shop was a post with a top hat nailed in a cocked position; hence, the name, The Cocked Hat Corner.

The Dogtown School, Elsinboro School, or Hagersville School was built around 1825. Dogtown got its name from Dr. David Wiley, who, after making his rounds, stated that there were more dogs than people living in Hagersville.

Independent School, the school for the black community until its integration in the 1930's, was located in Moore's Corner.

About a hundred years ago, when William H. Reed wrote the *History of Schools in Salem County, New Jersey*, a small book was found that was the property of an Elsinboro teacher named George Villars. Mr. Villars started teaching in Elsinboro September 22, 1777. He listed his employers and students. Most all of the names are very familiar, like Abbott, Firth, Howell, Bacon, Fogg, Hoffman, McGregor, Johnston, Cannon, Brick, Hancock, and Nicholson. George Villars taught the first night school in the county, and some of his students were the parents of the children he had in the day time. He also left us with a bit of a mystery, for in his book, he made a notation that he had heard the British troops were in Salem. A few days later, when the British marched past the school on their way to burn Holme Land, George Villars disappeared, never to be heard of again.

MONEY ISLAND and EAGLE ISLAND

If you like stories about pirates, buried treasure, hunting, fishing, farming, Indians and the mysterious circle of stones they left behind, the Fort, bird-watching and nature in general, then you would like the lower half of our township.

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MAP Grant

The Salem County Historical Society has been awarded a Fiscal Year 1992 Museum Assessment Program I grant. The grant, for which the Society had applied, was made by the American Association of Museums of Washington, D.C. The grant helps museums cope with change and improve their operations. This will be a process of self study and peer consultation.

A surveyor of the American Association's selection will do an on-site assessment of our museum and procedures. He/she will then submit a written report for our study and action where necessary.

A Reminder to Members

As a safeguard to ensure the personal safety of members and visitors alike in the event of an accident or fire, the following policy has been in effect for some time:

No person shall have access to the museum unless accompanied by society staff or an officer. Collection researchers may have unaccompanied access to museum upon approval of the board of trustees.

"No person" shall mean no non-member, regular or life member not holding elected office in the Society. Members of the Society's Board of Trustees have free access to the museum during open hours, but must accompany their guests at all times.

"Access" shall mean entrance to any space other than the entrance hall and research library.

Upon entrance, all non-staff persons are to sign the guest register to provide a record of their visit, and to aid fire-fighters in building evacuation in the event of fire.

Elsinboro *continued from Page 5*

The land from Mill Ditch on the north to Alloway's Creek on the south was once a land grant belonging to John Mason, one of the first settlers of Elsinboro. His home, Mason Point, is still standing. The lower part of the house was built in 1698, the high part in 1701. Over the years, the grant was split into several parcels. From the creek to Black Ditch is Money Island; from Black Ditch to Mill Ditch is Eagle Island. Just after World War I, Money Island was enlarged and heightened by river bottom pumped in by dredges, thereby making it suitable for farming, which continued until the forties. The folklore stories about the shad cabins, dredging, bank-building and farming have been handed down by the families who owned the ground: the Fogs, Ayares' Sowers' and Powells, just to name a few.

In the 1970's, William Vanneman wrote an article about Eagle Island. In his article, he stated this land also had been farm-land, and at the turn of the century, was sold to a group of professional men from Philadelphia who turned it into a private hunting club. I will update Mr. Vanneman's article with two additions: first, Eagle Island has since been sold to a conservation group, and Mr. and Mrs. Carlton Sowers were the last caretakers of the hunting club; and, secondly, there was a part of Eagle Island called the Devil's Plantation. No joke! Well, at least not yet. It was a real place and is listed on the deeds of the Redroe Morris Farm and Eagle Island. Years ago, this 75-acre tract of low land was covered with trees, thickets and was generally thought of as a good place to stay out of, especially at night.

THE JERSEY DEVIL

I first heard about it when I was a kid when an old neighbor used to delight in telling me stories about the Devil's Plantation, "the Elsinboro home of the Jersey Devil." At the end of each story, after he had me about half-scared to death, he would say, "Boy, don't worry; the old-timers chased him over into Lower Alloway's Creek, and he lives down around Harmersville and Canton." All the years since, I have been content with the knowledge that I could hunt and trap the plantation without worrying about the old boy, because I knew where he was. One day last July, I picked up the Sunday paper and saw the Associated Press had an article about renovating our State House, and there carved on the Assembly Clerk's podium was a picture of the Jersey Devil!

L.A.C., I humbly apologize, because, with all the goings-on at the State House in the last couple of years, we both should have known that he became a politician and moved to Trenton!

The last stop is Hay Market, our home in Elsinboro's Sharptown, which was named for Dr. Sharp, who naturally never lived here. This is but a short journey to Elsinboro with only a chance to skim the surface, but I hope you enjoyed the trip. ■

Coming in the June issue

Lower Alloways Creek Township by Beatrice Maul.

1886 Salem Map Limited Reprint

The Society would like to offer a reprint of the 1886 Pictorial Map of Salem, #29 in our catalogue of maps. It shows the houses, buildings and streets existing at that time. This is a small section of the map that was published by O.H. Bailey & Co., Boston, Mass.



This limited, numbered edition would measure 19" x 25" and would be printed on acid-free paper of a weight suitable for framing and would cost under twenty dollars.

The purpose of this article is to survey the membership for interest in this endeavor to determine the number of maps that should be printed.

If you are interested, please return the form below or telephone the Society at 935-5004 before May 15, 1992. Please send no money at this time.

Salem County Historical Society
79-83 Market Street
Salem, NJ 08079

Yes, I will be interested in purchasing a numbered, limited-edition print of the 1886 Pictorial Map of Salem. Please advise me when it becomes available.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Salem County Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

VOL. XXXIII

JUNE 1988

NO. 2

Salem Cove's Roundhouse

by Wm. M. Waddington

Many old timers remember "The Roundhouse." It stood just south of the mouth of Salem Creek, on the first high ground in the two mile stretch of beach that runs to Fort Elfsburg point on the Delaware.

Its beginning, around 1860, came about when twelve prominent men from the Philadelphia area leased a small portion of river frontage on the old (1786) farm, then owned by Albert H. Slape, a prominent lawyer in Salem. Their purpose was to build a clubhouse to facilitate hunting, fishing, and boating on the Delaware. One member of this club was Samuel Disc, of the Disc saw family; another was a diamond merchant; a third was president of the Philadelphia-Camden Ferry Company. When the clubhouse was completed, the brass plate on the front door was engraved "Elsinboro Club."

The club members sometimes entertained local people. Mrs. Howard "Stoney" Harris Sr., mother of our "Stoney" Harris, of Cowtown fame, told us Howard Sr. proposed marriage to her in a row boat in front of the club.

After Albert Slape's death in 1898, the Elsinboro Club moved to Indian River in lower Chesapeake Bay. Mr. Slape's widow, Josephine Boon Slape, along with her sister, Sara Boon, took over the Roundhouse as a summer home. A fancy hand-painted wooden sign over the front door now proclaimed the house "Mulberry Lodge."

These two sisters were the last of the prominent Boon family of ship captains: Robert, George and Hoover. They plied the Delaware river out of Salem on packets and side-wheelers about 1820-1860.

When Josephine and Sara weren't summering by the river they resided in the well-known Slape house (1826-



The Roundhouse in 1900

June Quarterly Meeting

The Quarterly Meeting of the Salem County Historical Society will be held on Sunday, June 12, 1988, at 1:30 p.m. in the St. John's Parish Hall located at the corner of Market and Grant Streets.

Marilyn Wolf of Winterthur Museum will be guest speaker. Her topic will be "Cooking Over The Open Hearth," a lecture and slide presentation of eighteenth century fireplaces, cooking vessels, methods employed in cooking over the open hearth, and the foods used.

The Alexander Grant House will be open for tours following the meeting. Refreshments will be served by members of the Society.

Dues Reminder

We are at the end of the second quarter and there are still some members who have not paid their dues. Don't be left out when it comes time to receive the newsletter and notices about events at the Society! There are some interesting things in store for members. Dues money makes this newsletter possible as well as maintaining the museum and administration costs of the organization. If you haven't sent your payment yet, we urge you to do so now.

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Salem When It Was A Village

continued from page 2

The village was not compactly built. Double houses were not common, each dwelling aiming to have a yard and garden, the latter to supply the family with vegetables, none of which were sold.

What is now Market Street came straight up to meet Broadway (formerly Old Wharf Street) and there was stopped by important buildings. There were two corners and at or near them became the center of business. The chief corner was the one adjoining the Court House. Here inhabitants collected by day and night and it became a place to expose fruit and vegetables for sale. During Court Week men gathered to talk. Women usually avoided the Court House corner, crossing over to pass down Market Street in front of Sherron's Hotel. There were no private routes on account of both taverns having the custom of putting out chairs for the men of the place or strangers to sit on. It was an embarrassing thing for women young and old to pass around these corners.

One feature of early Salem was the series of public wells placed on the edge of the side paths. They had the old-fashioned wooden pumps. They were placed on a platform at about four or five feet high, with a large wooden handle attached to the works inside, and any man, woman or child by working the handles brought a stream of water through a large wooden spout on one side of the pump. The operation of pumping being over and the receptacle filled as it stood on the platform, there was usually a stream of water still coming from the spout. It ran down into the gutters and passed off, except in cold weather when ice formed and it was the great amusement of the girls (who did not skate in those days) to slide. One of the most important of these pumps for affording the children a sliding place was in front of Miss Polly Smart's house. The noise of the children was so annoying to the old lady that she often endeavored to drive them away with her tongue. They paid no attention to it; becoming desperate, she had the pump handle taken off, and they said she kept it in her bureau drawer.

I have lived in several different places and I never saw such an arrangement of public wells as there used to be in Salem. In some towns North and South was one public well in the center of the town, but here in Salem these wells were at short distances from each other. One in front of the Court House was retained for many years. There was one just around what is now the City Bank corner, from which the occupants of the original brick dwelling supplied all the domestic wants of the family living in that building. The kitchen door opened on to the street, and the occupants of the kitchen would be seen a dozen times in a day filling their pails with water.

These wells were all about the town that was built up. The persons who built themselves dwellings had their own private wells but those who rented houses depended on these public wells. Some of the wells afforded superior quality of water. Col. Robert G. Johnson never used the well in his yard for drinking or cooking, but had it brought from a famous spring on his property known as the Spring House farm, now Eighth Street.

The most conspicuous dwellings to be seen in my childhood were Dr. Rowan's large brick house on West Broadway and William N. Jeffer's at the corner of Market and West Griffith.

Roundhouse - continued from page 1

1935) that stood on the corner of Market and Griffith Streets in Salem. The location of this classic, high columned house is where the present Jack Rabbit store now stands.

By 1930, their ages dictated that the sisters retire to their Salem residence for their remaining years. Sara Boon survived Josephine Slape, and at Sara's death in 1935 the Roundhouse, and the farm it stood on, were willed to Joseph Schrier and family.

Then along came the Waddington family in 1937. We carved out 100 feet of river frontage from wilderness and used the Roundhouse for our home for ten years. With our fourth offspring on the way, we simply outgrew it and built our present home just in back of the old Roundhouse, which was demolished in 1947. In repairing the stone bulkhead we uncovered the remains of the brick foundation of Andrew Thompson's "Immigrant House." Andrew had arrived in the area in 1675 with John Fenwick and his band of Quakers. This historic house had gone out to the tides around 1840.

1989 OPEN HOUSE

Recently business and civic leaders announced the early stages of a revitalization plan for Salem. The community has responded with tremendous excitement and interest. As members of the Salem County Historical Society, we have a special interest in the preservation and life of our city.

Our biennial open house tour is one of the outstanding cultural events for which Salem is uniquely qualified. Many have graciously opened their homes for this tour, time after time. Others have probably thought, "Someday I'll do it." We hope this will be the year you'll decide to do just that. Let's join together to make the 1989 Open House one of the best ever. It's just one way to help renew the feelings of pride we have in the area we live in and love.

Emilie Carpenter
Sally Funk
Co-chairpersons

Tours of Society Headquarters

Members are reminded that tours for groups can be arranged only by Society headquarters. If you are approached personally by anyone contemplating a tour please refer the interested party to Alice Boggs on 609-935-5004.

Mr. L. A. LeJambre of the Bordentown, N.J. Historical Society would very much appreciate learning where a TALL CASE CLOCK MADE BY ISAAC PEARSON of BURLINGTON, N.J. is now housed. Is it still in Salem County?

If you have any information about this clock, please call Mildred Dennis at 769-1359 or write to Mr. LeJambre at: 106 Crosswicks St., Bordentown, N.J. 08505.