

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Salem County Historical Society

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Time, Tide and The Hancock's Bridge Massacre

Chuck Coblentz



“...some strange error in the Naval Department...”

In the predawn darkness of March 21, 1778, American-born soldiers loyal to Britain, known as the Queen's Rangers, burst simultaneously through the front and rear doors of the home of Judge William Hancock in the quiet village of Hancock's Bridge. Rushing from first floor to attic, they bayoneted its startled occupants, some of whom were a company of patriot militia stationed there to guard the bridge over Alloway Creek. In less than fifteen minutes eight soldiers and civilians, including Judge Hancock, lay dead or mortally wounded, and an equal number writhed

severely wounded in a pool of their own blood. Three other Hancock's Bridge residents also lay bayoneted to death in their own homes, and another man, a soldier on patrol, was shot and killed as he tried to escape.

In the years since, numerous accounts have been written about what has become known as the "Hancock's Bridge Massacre." Most of these rely primarily on two sources: The Journal of the Operations of the Queens Rangers (1787)ⁱ by John Graves Simcoe, present as the commanding officer of the Queens Rangers, and An Historical Account of the First Settlement of Salem (etc.) (1839)ⁱⁱ by Colonel Robert C. Johnson, who as a seven year old boy saw his family roughed up by the British when they invaded Salem County.

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The *Quarterly Newsletter* is published by the Salem County Historical Society Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter.

This publication may include historical materials that contain language or stereotypes reflecting the culture or language of a particular period or place. These items are presented as part of the historical record.

Research Library & Museum Hours

Tuesday through Saturday
12 Noon - 4 PM
Admission Fee \$5.00
Free for Members

www.salemcountyhistoricalociety.com

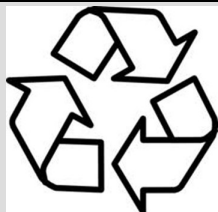
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Mission Statement: The mission of the Salem County Historical Society is to seek, document, preserve, interpret and perpetuate Salem County’s heritage, and to enhance the awareness and appreciation of that heritage, through its research, collections, functions, exhibits, educational programs and publications, for the benefit of future generations and for the betterment of the community.

On the cover: The Hancock House, Hancock’s Bridge, NJ

From the Collection of the Salem County Historical Society



Please Recycle your Newsletter

Message From the Administrator

Dear Members and Friends,

Since we last spoke with you, significant and exciting changes have happened at the Society. First and foremost, we have had changes to the Board of Trustees due to our recent Board elections. Margaret Maxwell-Mood has taken over as our Board President, Trudy O’Hare has moved from Treasurer to Vice-President, and Gay Schneeman has joined the Board as a Trustee. It is my great pleasure to welcome them to their new positions. Leaving the Board in this cycle are Michael Cooke and Ron McGill, while Donald Pierce has become Trustee Emeritus. I am extremely grateful to each of them for their service and dedication to the Society. But we are truly a family here, and I know that each of them will continue to be involved in their own way.

Also leaving us recently was our librarian Beverly Bradway. She is moving on to continue her academic studies. Beverly was a truly outstanding asset to the Society due to both her skills as a librarian and her tremendous knowledge of local history. She will be very much missed.

The Librarian position did not stay vacant long, and we are proud to announce that Sue Dolbow has come aboard to fill the post. Sue is an experienced librarian and a Salem County resident who has been a library volunteer at the Society for some time. I am pleased to have Sue with us and I believe she will be a great addition to the team.

As you know, we have been working for some time to repair a structural issue in the Grant House that has prevented us from opening the second floor to visitors. I am very pleased to announce that the work has been completed. We are now in the process of repainting two of the rooms affected by the work. I would like to thank the wonderful volunteers who have taken the time to help scrape, sand and paint. The completion of this work will greatly expand the ability of the Society to exhibit and interpret Salem County History. Look for new exhibits and new spaces to be opening in the coming months.

Speaking of exhibits, our new exhibit, “Bitter is the Fruit of this War”: Salem County in the Civil War, is in the research and development phase. The Society has some wonderful materials related to the Civil War in our collection, and I look forward to incorporating them into the exhibit. This exhibit is scheduled to open at the beginning of May and will feature the stories of Salem County natives and residents who experienced the war first-hand. In the process of doing research for the exhibit we encourage anyone who has material related to Salem County in the Civil War to contact us. We are looking for artifacts and stories from this important period in our history.

As you can see, there is a lot going on at the Society. There is much more to come. We look forward to your continued support as we find more stories to tell and new ways to tell them.

Andrew Coldren



Founded 1884

Calendar of Events

- ◆ **Sunday, March 10, 2013**
Quarterly Meeting 1:30PM
Friends Village in Woodstown
Speaker: Andrew Coldren
Topic: The Salem County Experience in the Civil War
- ◆ **Sunday, March 23, 2013**
Rededication of the Quinton Bridge Monument
11:30AM at Route 49 across from Cottage Avenue in Quinton
- ◆ **Saturday, May 4, 2013**
Open House Tour: The Civil War and Salem County
- ◆ **May 2013**
New exhibit opens to the public:
"Bitter is the Fruit of this War":
Salem County in the Civil War
- ◆ **Saturday, June 1, 2013**
"Seven Steps to Freedom"
Time and location to be announced
- ◆ **Sunday, June 9, 2013**
Quarterly Meeting 1:30PM
Friends Village in Woodstown
Speaker & Topic: "B. Harold Smick, Jr.
Attended 18 Presidential Inaugurations Since January 20, 1941"
- ◆ **September 2013**
Society's Annual Dinner
- ◆ **Sunday, October 20, 2013**
John S. Rock Memorial Lecture 3:00PM
Mt. Pisgah AME Church, 15 Yorke Street, Salem

Society News and Recent Events

The work on the structural problem in the floor of the Grant Bedroom has been completed. We are looking forward to opening more of our space to visitors in the next few months. By the Spring Open House Tour, we should have more of the Society open to the public than we have in over twenty years.

Speaking of the Open House Tour... the theme this year is the Civil War. The date is Saturday, May 4. Look for more details in this edition of the newsletter and on our website and Facebook page.

The Society's new exhibit "Bitter is the Fruit of this War": Salem County in the Civil War will open in May. Stay tuned for accompanying programs and

events.

The Salem County Historical Society welcomed Sue Dolbow as our new librarian on Tuesday, January 29th. Sue takes over for Beverly Bradway, who left to continue her studies. Stop by the Society to meet Sue and bring your research questions!

The Society would like to thank Michele Marino for her work on the Museum inventory project. Michele has been working with us as an intern for the last two months and concluded her term at the end of January.

The Society is a participant in the "Seven Steps to Freedom" program, beginning on Saturday, June 1st. The Society will be open to Museum visitors free of charge that day.

Spring Open House

May 4th 10AM to 6PM

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. To coincide with this event, the theme of this year's Spring Open House Tour will be the Civil War and Salem County.

Please join us for an up-close and personal look at the families and individuals who played a role in events that surrounded this great conflict. Sites will include the Underground Railroad and the stories of local slaves and their quest for freedom. Visit the private homes of citizens who lived in them at the time of the conflict, and visit the final resting places of soldiers, black and white, who laid down their lives to preserve the Union and advance the cause of Freedom for all.



The Goodwin House, 47 Market Street, Salem, NJ

REDEDICATION

QUINTON BRIDGE MONUMENT

SATURDAY—MARCH 23, 2013—11:30AM

RTE. 49 & QUINTON-ALLOWAY RD—QUINTON NJ

OAK TREE CHAPTER

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Questions? Email Lynn at: garykelley5@msn.com

Library Acquisitions

- Beringer, Margaret C. and Kern, Annesley C.**, George Agnew Chamberlain Collection. (2012.039)
- Brinker, Beulah Lafferty**, Woodstown, NJ. Book, *A History of Monroeville* compiled by donor. (2012.042)
- Camp, Letitia Duell**, Pilesgrove, NJ. Books, *Days on The Farm, Days on The Farm Book II* compiled by donor. (2012.035)
- DuBois, Nancy**, Salem, NJ. Photo of Mannington Hall, scan of woodcut of Hedgefield. (2012.040)
- Fedora, Joseph G. and Ruth Ann**, Woodstown, NJ. A home journal written 11/22/1862, 6/3/1862, 1863 and 4/26/1866. Includes public vendue 12/10/1840 of farm formerly occupied by Ezekiel Davis recorded by John W. Maskell, clerk of the sale. Two loose sheets, listing court of trial for small causes with John W. Maskell vs Josiah Craig 5/26/1842, vs Alford Dorton 9/28/1841 and vs Silas Noble 5/26/1842. In memory of Carlton and Carolyn Dunn. (2012.032)
- Greever, Matthew B.**, Alloway, NJ. Municipal calendars for Salem City (5) 1978-1979, 1983-1984, 1979-1980, 1980-1981, 1981-1982. (2012.002)
- Kelty, S. Lewis**, Pilesgrove, NJ. Photograph, Alloway School group c1900, in Memory of Adessa Coutch Fox. (2012.036)
- Landrey, David**, Sarasota, FL. Postcards mailed to Salem Glass Works 1901-1920. (2012.037)
- Martinelli, Patricia**, Vineland, NJ. Book, *New Jersey Ghost Towns, Uncovering The Hidden Past*. By Patricia A. Martinelli. (2012.033)
- McCarthy, Paul**, Pennsville, NJ. Panoramic photograph of the Salem High School Class of 1931 trip to Mount Vernon. (2012.041)
- Morita, Sharron**, Bridgeton, NJ. Book, *Bridgeton New Jersey*. (2012.034)
- Owen, Lawrence B., M.D.**, Pilesgrove, NJ. Three images from the H. Munro Githens Collection related to the railroad. (2013.005)
- Stiles, John W.**, Woodstown, NJ. Book, *Our Proud Salem County Veterans*. (2012.019)
- Vaneman, Christopher**, Pennsville, NJ. Poster, Wilson Line Ferry Gateway to the North and East, New Castle-Pennsville Ferries, printed by Associated Printers, Pennsville. (2013.004)
- Woolman, Carol**, Bar Harbor, ME. Items related to Elmer area, buildings, sports teams belonging to William Francis "Frank" Riley. (2012.038)

Collections Spotlight

The Museum Inventory Project is moving into its last phase. The only collection items left to inventory are those housed on our third floor. The remaining floors of our building as well as the barn are inventoried! If you have any ideas about this quarter's artifact please e-mail info@salemcountyhistoricalsociety.com.

What we know: This artifact appears to be a press of some sort. It has four legs supporting a wood frame stand. There is a round wood piece at the center. Two vertical slats and two horizontal slats are located above the round piece. One of the horizontal slats is adjustable.

What we would like your help with: What is the function of this artifact? Is it a press?



—**Mr. Thomas L. Ayers**, sexton of the Canton Baptist Church, **has a desk** which has quite a history, as well as being quite a curiosity, and is of walnut, and contains four large and eight small drawers, besides a place for ledger and miscellaneous papers.

The desk is 117 years old, having been made in Salem in 1765, for one **Jacob Hollinshead**. At his death, it passed into the hands of **Tyler Loggins**. At his death, in 1800, it was purchased by **James Simpson**. Between that date and 1830 it was also owned at different times by **E. Simpson, H. Simpson, G. Benkey, John Lasens and Charles Bailey**.

In 1830 **John Bailey** became the owner and it remained in his possession for thirty-five years. It was then purchased by **Jarvest West**, and shortly after it became the property of **Caroline West**, who, in 1877, presented it to the present owner. —X.

National Standard, Salem, NJ, November 15, 1882

Fine Portrait—Mr. John P. Flynn, our photographer, has added a new feature to his business, that of finishing portraits in crayon, and for the purpose he has purchased a solar camera. His first picture, that of the late Rev. George Wheeler, is on exhibition in the window of A. E. Taylor's store. It is a faithful picture and is well executed.

Salem Sunbeam, Salem, NJ
May 6, 1881

Annual Appeal 2012

On behalf of the Salem County Historical Society, we would like to thank you for your contribution. Please be assured your generous donation is greatly appreciated and needed to sustain the Society into 2013. Your response to our 2012 Annual Appeal will go toward assisting the Society in our mission of preserving the past in Salem County and continuing to provide programs and services to school children, members, genealogist, scholars, local residents and visitors who rely upon the Society.

We are extending an invitation to you and your guest to visit our wonderful Museum and Library collections in the near future. In May, our main exhibit will feature the Civil War and Salem County. Our curator, Andrew Coldren, has taken great effort in arranging a rewarding display of artifacts, stories and historical information for visitors to the Salem County Historical Society.

Your donation and support make a difference.

Mr. Forman S. Acton	Mr. Timothy Hack	Mr. & Mrs. John Montaigne, Jr. in memory of Gerald Montaigne Jr.
Ms. Sara E. Alexander Smith	Ms. Mary D. Hancock in memory of William C. Hancock, Jr.	Ms. Elizabeth A. Leimbach & Mr. Albert Louis Zambone in memory of Louis Corsiglia
Anonymous in honor of Barbara Smith Duffy	Mr. & Mrs. Charles Harrison	Mr. & Mrs. Dennis O'Hare
Mrs. Mary C. Arnold	Harvest Community Bank	Dr. & Mrs. Lawrence B. Owen
Ms. Gwen D. Art in honor of Brian & Barbara Duffy	Mr. & Mrs. Walter Hemphill	Mr. & Mrs. Dean Pappas
Mr. & Mrs. E. Russell Bassett, Jr.	Mr. Ernest Henderson in honor of Donald Pierce	Mrs. Lucille B. Pote in memory of Hal W. Pote
Mrs. Marjorie Bill in memory of George Smalley Bill	Ms. Katherine A. Heverin	Mr. & Mrs. J. Lewis Powell
Ms. Gail S. Boyd in memory of Samuel Boyd	Mr. & Mrs. John Hofbauer	Mr. Malcolm Schalick Sharp in memory of Harriet Schalick Sharp
Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Bradway	Mr. William C. Horner	Mr. & Mrs. Craig Schneeman
Mr. Bob Brooks	Ms. Joann Humphrey	Ms. Marie A. Schuster
Dr. & Mrs. Robert Brooks	Ms. Margaret Hilliard Johnson in memory of Dr. William T. Hilliard	Mr. & Mrs. B. Harold Smick, Jr.
Mrs. Joan Miller Brown in memory of Esther Griffen Miller Morris	Ms. Wendy Johnson	Ms. Nancy Sprangler in memory of Anna Fogg & Marian Spangler
Dr. & Mrs. Harlan Buzby	Mr. Travis O. Johnson	Mrs. Marjory Standiford
Chief Master Sgt. & Mrs. William Camp in memory of the Camp Families of Elmer	Mr. K. Kaufmann in memory of Connie Kaufmann	Mr. & Mrs. John Streetz
Mr. & Mrs. David S. Campbell	Mr. Noel R. Kemm	Mr. & Mrs. Charles J. Tisa
Mr. & Mrs. John Carpenter, Jr.	Ms. Margaret L. Klein in memory of Captain William Smith	Mr. Louis Clifford Van Doren
Ms. Elizabeth D. Chestnut	Ms. Dorothy P. Kramme	Mr. & Mrs. John Vittori
Mr. & Mrs. David A. Culver	Mr. & Mrs. James K. Lloyd	Mrs. Alice W. Waddington
Mr. & Mrs. John Elk	Ms. Jane Maltman in memory of Joseph N. Ray	Ms. Amy H. Widger
Exchange Club of Salem	Dr. Maggie Maxwell-Mood	Mr. Gary Wilson
Ms. Marion M. Finlaw in memory of Myranna & Hazel Morris	Ms. Ellen Morrissey in memory of Bernadette Morrissey	Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Wohlrab in memory of Ralph Magill
Dr. & Mrs. Edward T. Fogg	Mr. & Mrs. A. Thomas Miller	Mr. Jeffrey E. Wood
Mr. William Gallo, Jr.	Ms. Joan Miller Brown in memory of Ester Griffen Miller Morris	Mr. Jonathan E. Wood, Jr.
Dr. Gregory Guderian		Mrs. Elizabeth H. Yerkes



John Graves Simcoe

(Continued from cover) The most comprehensive publication in the years since, Salem County in the Revolution (1932)ⁱⁱⁱ, written by Frank H. Stewart, then President of the Gloucester County Historical Society, incorporated both Simcoe and Johnson, as well as numerous previously unpublished primary sources. Stewart points out that Johnson's account of the British actions, while highly passionate and

entertaining, is often inaccurate and historically unreliable. Nevertheless, Johnson remains the sole source for much of the information on the Revolutionary War in Salem County and may, with caution, be used to supplement more trustworthy sources where details are lacking. Subsequent accounts of the action such as in History of Salem County (1937)^{iv} by Joseph S. Sickler, and a series of articles written around the time of the Bicentennial by William D. Timmons, D.D.S., rely largely on Stewart and a small number of additional sources that have recently come to light. Despite the exhaustive investigations done by Stewart and others over the years, many details of the attack on Hancock's Bridge have eluded researchers and many questions remain unanswered. For instance, how exactly did Simcoe get over two-hundred of his Queens Rangers from Salem to Hancock's Bridge that night undetected? What time did he depart Salem and arrive at the mouth of Alloway Creek? What was the "*strange error in the Naval Department*," he alludes to in his journal, that forced him to change strategy in the middle of the operation? Where had he originally figured to land, and what plan of attack was he forced to abandon? Finally, when and where did he actually come ashore and by what route did he march his troops into Hancock's Bridge?

Simcoe's *Journal*, a detailed eyewitness description of the events of March, 1778, and assumed to be the most historically reliable of the accounts, provides an excellent foundation. Supplementing this journal with meteorological records kept at the time^v, along with knowledge of solar and lunar cycles^{vi} and Delaware Bay tide tables from March 1778^{vii}, sheds new light on the strategies and operations that guided the British soldiers to Hancock's Bridge on that fateful night.

The Continental Army's desperate situation at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-78 has been written of extensively. Less publicized were the shortages the occupying British Army was experiencing in Philadelphia. Despite a vigorous trade with American farmers, mainly Loyalists, the strain of an extra 16,000 mouths to feed, along with horses and draft animals in need of hay, depleted the storehouses, and on Thursday, March 12th,

under orders from General William Howe, the 17th, 27th, and 46th Regiments and the Queens Rangers boarded a flotilla and sailed down the Delaware on a foraging expedition under the command of Colonel Charles Mawhood.^{viii} They arrived in Salem in the early morning hours of Tuesday, March 17th and immediately set about rounding up cattle and gathering forage. Rather than contest the British as they landed, the county militia had withdrawn from Salem and set up a line of defense on the south bank of Alloway Creek, concentrating their forces around three crossings: Thompson's Bridge on the east, Quinton's Bridge in the center, and Hancock's Bridge on the west, a distance of approximately ten miles.

The two forces first engaged one another at Quinton's Bridge on Wednesday morning, March 18th, where despite a successful ambush of the militia the British assault failed to take the bridge. The foraging expedition had yet to secure a safe land route south of Alloway Creek into lower Salem County as well as Cumberland County, a countryside rich in cattle and feed crops. At the end of the day militia troops under the command of Colonel Benjamin Holme continued to hold the strong creek line. With the arrival of Colonel Elijah Hand's Cumberland militia toward the end of the Quinton's Bridge action, if anything, their defense was stronger than it had been when the British first set foot in Salem County.

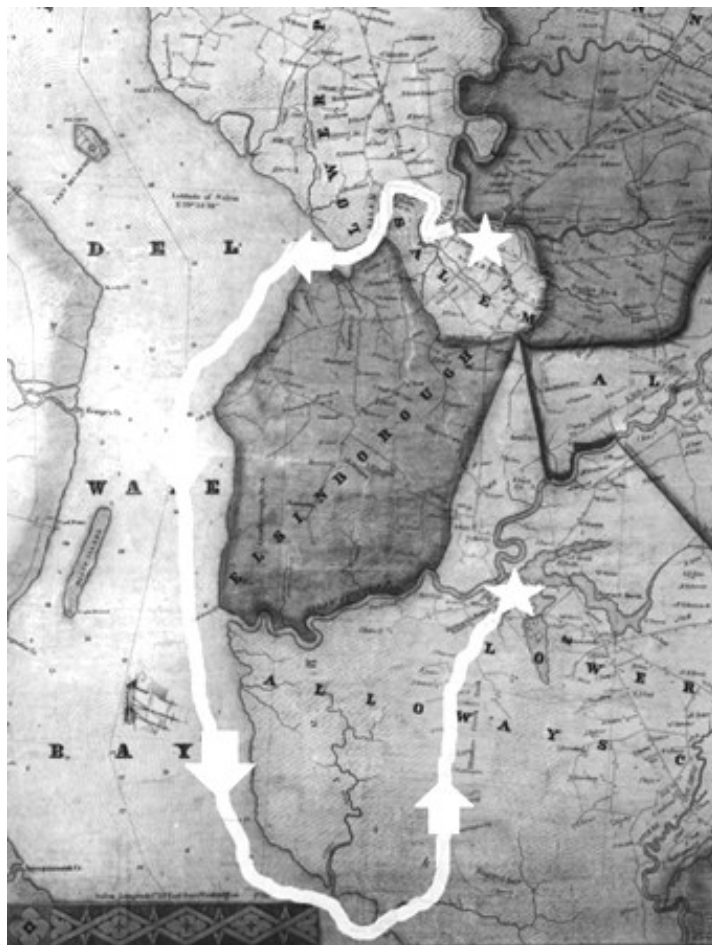
In the subsequent stalemate the army under the direction of Mawhood continued foraging operations north of Alloway Creek, an area that had been harvested only a month before by Continental troops commanded by Brigadier General Anthony Wayne, sent out from Valley Forge by Major General Nathaniel Greene. In letters back to Continental Army Commander George Washington, Wayne reported that a substantial number of Tories in New Jersey had hid their cattle away from the Continentals, which explains why on March 19th, according to engineering officer Archibald Robertson, the British were able to drive "some cattle" and load nine vessels in port at Salem with hay.^{ix} For Mawhood it was a good start but far more would be needed to remedy the shortage in Philadelphia. His challenge was to gather as much as he could within the confines of a fairly tight schedule. To accomplish that goal he would need to figure out a way to get past the rebel militia into land untapped by Wayne's expedition. Determining that an all-out assault over the long narrow causeways bounded by marsh before the well-defended bridges at Quinton and Hancock's Bridge would prove too costly, Mawhood and Simcoe met in Salem to consider the possibility of outflanking the militia. On the American right was Thompson's Bridge, with little marsh around it and no causeway it was the most vulnerable of the three bridges over the creek. But reaching it would involve moving the army five miles through territory where Holmes had posted numerous "videttes" making a surprise flank attack a virtual impossibility.

Additionally, in the skirmish at Quinton's Bridge, Holme's actions indicate he had been extremely concerned with his right flank; it appears Thompson's Bridge was where he expected a British attack from day one.

To the west the American defense at Hancock's Bridge was similar to Quinton as any attacking force would have to negotiate a long causeway before reaching the bridge, making such an assault extremely vulnerable to flank fire from the Americans. Hancock's Bridge was further guarded on its left flank by a wide tidal marsh. To reach a point southwest of the rebel line the British would first have to negotiate the complicated estuarine currents and tides of the bay that made navigation, particularly along the shoreline, problematic at best. Should that be accomplished, in order to get from the bay-shore to the upland they would next have to traverse one to four miles of mud and silt, overlain with beaten down mats of rush, and intersected by a maze of creeks and ditches of varying lengths and depths. Getting around the rebel left at Hancock's Bridge and attacking from the southwest presented challenges, but such an attack would have reasonable chance of success because it had the least odds of being detected. Mawhood "entrusted the enterprise" to Simcoe who notes that he was assisted throughout the process by "guides"— local Tories— who were intimately familiar with the Salem County landscape.^x On the 19th Simcoe, accompanied by Mawhood and a soldier patrol, made his way south of Salem to the William Abbott farm, one-quarter mile north of Alloway Creek, opposite Hancock's Bridge.^{xi} There he climbed a tree approximately a quarter mile from the creek and made a "rough sketch of the buildings" of the town, which, with loyalist help, he "improved into a tolerable plan of the place, and formed his mode of attack accordingly."^{xii}

Simcoe approximated the size of the rebel force he would be attacking at about four hundred. Just as crucial, he would have observed American platoons systematically patrolling the banks of the creek. Such operations made coming up the creek an undesirable route of attack, for if just one scout saw the attackers and alerted the main body of soldiers, surprise would be lost, and the British soldiers on the water would be sitting ducks for the musket fire of the alerted rebels. He needed a more secretive way into Hancock's Bridge, and one loyalist, unknown to this day, provided it.

Simcoe was presented with a route around the rebel left that would put him safely in the rear of the enemy on a direct road into Hancock's Bridge from the south and avoid having his troops plod through the marsh. Simcoe later wrote of the plan as follows: The expedition "was to be landed at an inlet, seven miles below Aloes creek, when the boats were immediately to be returned, and by a private road he was to reach Hancock's Bridge, opposite to which Major Mitchell was detached with the 27th regiment."^{xiii}



Simcoe's original planned route.

The inlet where Simcoe originally planned to land his forces has never been identified. Joseph Sickler believed it was Hope Creek,^{xiv} but that inlet is only five and a half miles south of Alloway Creek, and the creek meanders north into the marsh with no suitable landing for troops along its length. On the other hand, at Stony Inlet a creek easily wide enough for the flatboats, enters the bay exactly seven miles below the mouth of Alloway Creek, and one of its branches (now known as "Devil's Gut") drew up to a landing that would give the troops easy access to a "private road" (now called "Alloway Creek Neck Road") that led north, directly into Hancock's Bridge, seven miles distant. Most probably it was this route Simcoe planned to use in order to surprise and flank the Salem County militia.



Devil's Gut

Simcoe next conferred with naval officers to work out transportation of the troops. The British fleet had been a presence in the Delaware Bay for going on two years and he would trust their experience as well as their seamanship to get his Rangers from Salem Creek to Stony Inlet. Simcoe was probably led to believe he had about six hours to complete the transport, the normal period of time for an outgoing tide. At the appointed time the soldiers would climb into flatboats at Salem and with the help of the tidal current be rowed to the landing point seventeen miles distant. The keeled flatboats they employed were a wide-bottomed row galley, described as “barely seaworthy, difficult to row and maneuver, and detested by Royal Navy personnel:

“A single flatboat was propelled with twenty oars and crewed by twenty-five men (probably apportioned as follows: one boat commander, one coxswain, one quartermaster's mate, and twenty-two able seamen); for various reasons, the craft were often loaded only to fifty or seventy percent of their passenger capacity. Six such vessels would have carried one hundred and fifty crewmen, plus one hundred and fifty to two hundred soldiers.”^{xv}



A wide-bottomed row galley used by Simcoe and the Rangers.

According to Simcoe's Journal, approximately 225 soldiers would be involved in the operation.^{xvi} Such a number would require eight to ten flatboats, manned by 200-250 crew members. Since each soldier carried approximately 35 pounds of gear, with each sweep of the oars a flatboat would have to propel a minimum four and a half tons of weight through the water making them extremely vulnerable to both the currents and weather conditions, particularly wind, as waves of any appreciable height would break over the gunwales and inundate the low-riding hulls. Nevertheless, flatboats such as these were used extensively as troop transports in British operations around coastal areas. In 1776 for instance, the *HMS Rose* towed 30 flatboats up the East River where they were used to land troops at Kips Bay in the Battle of New York.^{xvii} The flatboats Simcoe utilized had been towed down the Delaware to Salem from Philadelphia by one or more of the warships involved in the



Simcoe's actual route.

foraging operation. With his attack route complete, the size and composition of his force decided, and his means of transportation set, all that was left to decide was when to start. Everything would depend on two factors. First, they would need to catch an outgoing tide which would propel them out of the Salem River and south, down the eastern side of the Delaware Bay. Second, they had to perform the operation under cover of darkness, as again, secrecy was absolutely essential in flank attacks of this sort. Any rebel observing a large contingent of soldiers loading into boats at the port of Salem could get word to Holme long before the Queen's Rangers reached Hancock's Bridge (assuming he found a way to elude the occupying British). Were that to occur, the Queen's Rangers, hoping for a surprise attack on the rebels, could themselves be surprised and ambushed to deadly effect. For all of the above reasons, Simcoe needed an evening when tide and time were properly aligned, and with the army in Philadelphia hungry for beef, the sooner the better. It turned out he wouldn't have to wait long. On Friday, March 20, 1778, high tide at the port of Salem occurred at 6:17 P.M.

Because the sun set at 6:13 P.M., and it wouldn't be dark enough to mask troop movements until twilight set in, Simcoe most probably left for Hancock's Bridge that night, just after 7:00 P.M. Utilizing the ebb tide, with muffled oars the seamen pulled the heavy flatboats down the river, around Tilbury Marsh and west into Salem Cove. From there they made their way south along the eastern shore, probably at some distance from the beach in order to maintain secrecy. The conditions that night could not have been better. Temperatures started out in the 50s, and there was no wind to speak of. Apparently all went according to plan until they arrived off the mouth of Alloway Creek, seven miles above Stony Inlet. In the words of Simcoe,

"By some strange error in the naval department, when the boats arrived off Aloes creek, the tide set so strong against them that, in the opinion of the officer of the navy, they could not reach the place of their destination till mid-day."^{xviii}

What happened? The Royal Navy was at this point in history the acknowledged master of sail. They had been patrolling the Delaware Bay and River for two years. How could they have been so off on something as basic as tidal direction? Simcoe, writing years afterward still sounded shocked, calling it a "*strange error*." The answer lies in the quirky nature of the Bay itself.

Modern research has demonstrated that tidal changes occur earlier in the shallow coastal areas of the Delaware Bay than in the deeper channels.^{xix} The tidal cycle also begins earlier in the south end and progresses up the bay to the north. In addition, the further inland on the creeks, the later the tide. All these factors contribute to the fact that even though only 10 nautical miles separate them, the tide changes seventy-five to ninety minutes earlier at the mouth of Alloway Creek than it does at the Port of Salem. Simcoe thought he had six hours to reach Stony Inlet, when in fact it was closer to four and a half.

Simcoe had a decision to make. Even powered by twenty oarsmen, the flatboats were no match for the tidal current along the eastern bay shore. Again, according to his Journal, "*...in the opinion of the officer of the navy, they could not reach the place of their destination (Hancock's Bridge) till mid-day.*"^{xx} This meant they would have to wait out the entire high tide cycle around Alloway Creek before starting again for Stony Inlet. The tide at the mouth of Alloway Creek started in at 11:24 P.M. on the night of the 20th, meaning that the expedition must have arrived there about this time. It would mean waiting in the dark and cold until 5:30 A.M. before they could pick up the outgoing tide south. Add another three hours of rowing and three more hours of marching, and they would end up approaching Hancock's Bridge in

broad daylight making a surprise attack nearly impossible. Clearly this was not acceptable.

Simcoe was left with two options: take the incoming tide back to Salem, regroup and try it again the next night, or come up with an alternative way into Hancock's Bridge that would get them there before daybreak. Returning to Salem seems at first glance the easy choice, but Simcoe, an experienced soldier, knew all too well how difficult it was to keep a secret during times of war. It was very probable that news of their expedition would reach Holme and the militia before the day was through. Simcoe wouldn't risk his Queens Rangers to such odds. Returning to Salem would effectively eliminate the possibility of another attempted flank attack on the rebel left. That left the second option – finding another route into Hancock's Bridge that night. Writing in his Journal in the third person: "*Major Simcoe determined not to return, but to land on the marshes, at the mouth of Aloes creek; there were good guides with him...*"^{xxi}

Totally unfamiliar with the terrain, the presence of local "*good guides*" was one of the deciding factors, but far more important was the confidence Simcoe placed in the troops under him. The Queen's Rangers were the "special ops" of their day, put together specifically for just such an operation.

"When Simcoe took command of the Queen's Rangers in October, 1777, he at once proceeded to organize them for that active kind of warfare in which they afterwards became so famous....A light corps," as Simcoe observes, augmented as that of the Queen's Rangers was and employed on the duties of an outpost had no opportunity of being instructed in the general discipline of the army, nor indeed was it very necessary; the most important duties, those of vigilance, activity and patience of fatigue, were best learned in the field; a few motions of the manual exercise were thought sufficient; they were carefully instructed in those of firing, but above all attention was paid to inculcate the use of the bayonet and a total reliance on that weapon."^{xxii}

When choosing a landing site from which they would march, Simcoe needed to consider a couple of factors. With the tide hard coming in, it would certainly be easy to ride it up Alloway Creek to a spot closer to Hancock's Bridge. But having spied on the militia from the Abbott farm the day before, he was aware of the regular patrols along the creek. Should the Rangers be detected and the alarm sounded, Simcoe would find his troops easy targets for the militia muskets, and worse— they would be pinned up the creek by the tide. Such a disastrous scenario he would not risk. Simcoe would disembark somewhere south of the mouth of Alloway Creek then pick and slog his way through the marsh to the upland, and attack Hancock's Bridge from the west.

He described their ordeal as follows...

"...after a march of two miles through marshes, up to the knees in mud and water, labours rendered more fatiguing by the carriage of the first wooden planks they met with, to form bridges with them over the ditches, they at length arrived at a wood upon dry land. Here the corps was formed for the attack."^{xxiii}

In terms of military accomplishment, Simcoe's strenuous march through the marshes of Alloway Creek is deserving of praise. With temperatures in the low 40s, the muddy ground was not frozen, making the worst of conditions for such a march. They had one circumstance in their favor – though the tide had turned; the depth of water in the creeks and ditches was still down. These they either forded or bridged with the "wooden planks" they secured.^{xxiv} Save for the light of the stars, the night was clear and dark, but at 1:29 A.M. a waning half-moon rose over the woods to the east, throwing at least some light on the landscape. A light breeze picked up from the northwest.

Eventually they felt the ground rising up and one by one over 200 troops emerged from the muck and mire and planted their feet upon the firm upland somewhere near the John and Hannah Oakford House. It had been a long night. They were cold, wet, and no doubt angry for a fight.

Simcoe formed them for attack. The town lay a mile and half before them. Most of its occupants were sound asleep. Unbeknownst to the Queens Rangers the majority of the rebel militia had moved east to Quinton for the night, leaving only around 30 soldiers to defend the town. Simcoe ordered bayonets to be fixed and they started for Hancock's Bridge.



Quinton native and a Salem High School graduate, Rev. Chuck Coblentz earned a B.S. in Geology at Rutgers University, followed by an M.S. in Paleontology at the University of Delaware. From there, he earned his M.Div. at Princeton Theological Seminary. Along the way, Rev. Coblentz has served United Methodist churches in Auburn, Penns Grove, Asbury Park and currently, Totowa, NJ. He was also chaplain and chair of the religion department at the Pennington School from 1998-2011. He and his wife Jean reside in West Orange.

Endnotes

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^xSimcoe, p. 50.

^{xi}Johnson, p. 148.

^{xii}Simcoe, p. 50.

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^{xv}Rees, John U., "'So much for a Scotch Prize.'" *Paramus, New Jersey*, 23 March 1780," <http://www.continentalline.org/articles/article.php?date=0502&article=050201>

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^{xvii}McCullough, David, *1776.* Simon & Schuster, 2005.

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^{xvix}Zeskind, L.M., and Le Lacheur, E.A., "Tides and Currents in Delaware Bay and River," Serial No. 336, United States Department of Commerce. U.S Coast and Geodetic Survey, Special Publication 123. 1930.

^{xx}Simcoe, p. 51.

^{xxi}*Ibid.*

^{xxii}Hannay, James ., *History of the Queen's Rangers,* from *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* , Third Series— 1908-1909, Volume II, Section II.

^{xxiii}Simcoe, p. 51.

^{xxiv}*Ibid.*

Genealogically Speaking —

**SURVIVING SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND MARINES, AND WIDOWS, ETC.
OF THE CIVIL WAR
JUNE 1890, FEDERAL CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES**

ALLOWAY TOWNSHIP

Clinton S. Cheeseman, Enumerator
[As transcribed]

William B. Willis	Adam Wentzell	Charles Johnson	Richard Marshall
George W. Ayres	John Miller	Ann F. Cheeseman, Widow	Elizabeth Lippincott,
Adam S. Rudolph	Samuel Ray	of Alfred J. Cheesman	Widowed
Alexander Robinson	Miller Jenkins	Alfred J. Cheeseman	Mary Wiley, Widowed
Gideon P. Butler	Miller Jenkins	William McNichols	Ann Sheppard, Widowed
John W. Drummond	William A. Miller	William McNichols	Rachel Graham, Widow
David H. Ware	Morris Isley	Clinton Cheeseman	of U. S. Sol.
David Schockley	William C. Loper	William Beall	
George W. Townsend	David Halter	Alaxander Newbold	
David S. Simkins	Mary P., Widow	James Darlington	
Isaac B Vannmeter	of Isaac Nichols	Jonathan Wentzell	

[Source:Ancestry.com]

**SALEM CO. FLYING
SERVICE INAUGURATED
NEAR PENNSVILLE**

An opportunity for Salem County residents to learn to fly without leaving the county is offered by the Salem County Flying Service, Inc., near Pennsville; it was announced this week.

Licensed by the New Jersey Aviation Commission, the Pennsville airport, headquarters of the Corporation, is located on the farm of Joseph Wright, directly in back of the old Salem-Pennsville Traction Company car barn at Parkview. There is, housed a new Taylor Cub cabin plane with which the Corporation is giving instruction Saturdays and Sundays at present.

George Smith, of Camden, formerly with the Philadelphia-Nantucket Lines is the government licensed instructor for the Corporation. Co-pilot of a Sikorsky-Amphibian plane, Smith has an impressive amount of flying time. The training ship which has a 40 horsepower, four-cylinder Continental motor is one of the most popular types in the United States and was chosen for its great safety factor, handling performance and economical operation.

The Corporation invites anyone interested in applying for flight instruction to call at the airport or to telephone Penns Grove 539-J4 or 61-R for further details. To date nearly a dozen students have received instruction. Pleasure flights around the county are also available at very low cost.

Penns Grove Record, Penns Grove, NJ, March 24, 1938



**LEARN TO
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\$2
A LESSON

Here's your chance to become a licensed pilot under tutelage of a government-qualified instructor and at a price anyone can afford.

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PENNSVILLE, Near Car Barn

**SALEM COUNTY
FLYING SERVICE**
FREE TRIAL FLIGHTS

ALEXANDER'S ANNALS

50 YEARS AGO

The Monitor-Register, March 1963

- Growing Urban Population Here Is Creating Problems.
- Robert Kidd, Jr. Installed at Penns Grove Post Office.
- Troop 38 Eagle Scouts: Chester Ambler, Joseph Bassett and Alan Parmelee; Woodstown High students.
- Freeholders Suspend County Farm Operations; Reject Bookmobile Offer.
- 3 new evening courses at Salem Tech in Penns Grove.

75 YEARS AGO

The Penns Grove Record, March 1938

- UPN Prohibits Use of Air Guns.
- A & P opens self service market on E. Harmony Street.
- Willard & Thomas Roberts to open Socony-Vacuum Service Station at Virginia Ave. & Harding Highway.
- Rutgers University Plans Evening Center for Penns Grove at ReHi.
- New Telephone Exchange to be completed soon at State Street & Railroad Avenue.

100 YEARS AGO

Salem Sunbeam, March 1913

- Biddle Hiles receives Carnegie Medal for bravery.
- Buffalo nickel goes into circulation tomorrow.
- Morris H. Pancoast sells one of his paintings to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.
- Tyson & Kane start auto express line between Woodstown and Philadelphia.
- 1,100 Shad Caught—Biggest catch ever remembered so early in one day.

Salem County Tobacco

Mr. Benjamin A. Tyler, of Lower Penn's Neck, who is engaged quite extensively in the culture of tobacco, sold his entire crop, consisting of 5,000 lbs., to William R. Matlack, cigar manufacturer of this city, a few days ago. Mr. Matlack says the leaf is first class in every respect.

The South Jerseyman, Salem, NJ, March 25, 1884



Mr. B. A. Tyler's crop of tobacco to which we referred to last week, and which was purchased by Mr. W. R. Matlack, of this city, weighed 6,500 lbs. and was grown on 4 acres. Mr. Tyler will receive for the crop nearly \$600. He proposes to grow the crop again next year.

Ibid, April 1, 1884

**SOUTH WOODSTOWN
SCHOOL RAZED**



SCHOOL FOR COLORED CHILDREN, SOUTH WOODSTOWN

South Woodstown School, Bailey Street, Woodstown, NJ

The South Woodstown School building is being torn down. The condition of the building was so poor that it was becoming a hazard. The Woodstown-Pilesgrove Board of Education will sell the land at public auction at a later date.

There is no charge to the board for the destruction of the building. It is being razed for salvage.

The building, built in 1920 at a total cost of \$18,190 fully equipped, was for the use of the colored children in Woodstown. It contained six rooms and accommodated 150 pupils.

At the dedication ceremonies October 27, 1920, W. A. Credirt, Principal of the Indiana Agriculture School for Colored Children, was guest speaker.

Members of the Board of Education at that time

were Walter Sylvester, president; Jesse Lippincott, vice president; Charles F. Pancoast, clerk; Stokes Davidson, M. W. Buzby, William Richman, Frank Austin, Horton Jones, Mrs. Rachel Horner and H. T. Robbins.

The Monitor-Register, Woodstown, NJ, March 22, 1963

Volunteers

J. Harlan Buzby	Ronald E. Magill
Michael J. Cooke	Craig Maue
Dave Culver	Margaret E. Maxwell-Mood
Sue Dolbow	Ellen Morrissey
Barbara Smith Duffy	Trudy K. O'Hare
Brian M. Duffy	Lawrence B. Owen
Dottie Fisher	Jim Paras
William J. Gallo, Jr.	Donald L. Pierce
Wayne Gotwals	Frank Powell
Charlotte Harrison	Craig Schneeman
Katherine Heverin	Gaye Schneeman
Peggy Kavanaugh	Janet Sheridan
Noel Kemm	Maggie Vaughan

Volunteer Spotlight

Charlotte Harrison

Following retirement from the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District in Woodstown, Charlotte Harrison of Woodstown thought very carefully about how she wanted to spend her time. Married to historian and author Charles "Chick" Harrison, and living in a historical home, she chose to join an active group of museum docents at the James & Ann Whitall House in Gloucester County. Thoroughly enjoying that experience, she asked our librarian if there was any need for docents here at Salem County Historical Society. The answer to that question is always "Yes!"

Charlotte has been a dedicated volunteer at the society on most Thursdays this past year. Originally trained as a museum docent, Charlotte also assists with library projects between tours. Many of her hours have been spent in the reading room, cataloguing into the PastPerfect system.

In addition to her museum and library work, Charlotte is also an enthusiastic member of The Master Gardeners of Gloucester County who spend many months of the year caring for the garden at Salem County Historical Society as just one of their many volunteer destinations.

As the seasons change and our needs fluctuate, we look forward to spending time with Charlotte just as often as she can be with us – in any capacity she chooses!

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CIVIL WAR LETTER FROM A SOLDIER

For the Standard.

SALEM, March 20th, 1863.

Friend Sharp:—Will you allow an old “Democrat”—one who has always voted that ticket, and who a few weeks ago sent from the Army a letter to be published in the “Sunbeam”—the privilege of putting the sentiments contained therein in your paper? Before I came to my native city my feelings were oftentimes wounded, and the letter containing my sentiments was written and sent to the editor of the above-named sheet to be treated with contempt, and kept from the public gaze.—The ideas were too loyal, the sentiments too pure, to suit the eyes of blatant treason and the disseminators of disunion sentiments.

How I shudder for the good and welfare of my country, when I hear the treasonable sentiments with which the ears of the truly loyal soldier is greeted upon his arrival at his “native heath;” as I peruse some of our northern newspapers—read the speeches of some of our politicians, the proceedings of our legislatures—and discover the lukewarmness, cowardly fear, and craven indifference that pervades the heart of the loyal States. It is treasonable, and must be crushed in its incipency.

It must be throttled, or soon you will have war—war, bloody and tragical, at your own thresholds. No man’s property will be safe; his home will no longer be his castle, his refuge, his “home, sweet home,” where his treasures are kept—his loving wife, his sweet and prattling children.

These things you are apprehensive of, for you see them every day; but what makes me and all loyal soldiers truly and heartily indignant, are the gross libels and misrepresentations as to *our* feelings, ideas and sentiments. These wicked, malicious, villainous slanderers, who would crush if they could this glorious Republic, and then mockingly smile at the ruin they had wrought—I mean those monstrous wretches who tell you the Army of the Potomac is no more, that we are ready to rise in mutiny and lay down our arms, while the most atrocious, violent, and vilest of enemies flaunts the banner of treason defiantly in our front,—that we, because the hour of midnight has struck, because gloom and darkness enthralls us as it were under its dark pall, are about to abandon that cause, upon the result of which hangs suspended mightier destinies than any involved in the grandest struggle that man has ever been engaged in, and must and will demonstrate to the whole civilized world the capacity of man for self-government; who would have the world believe that we are ready to descend to the most ignoble baseness, martyr the aspirations of a civilized age, ignore our tender sympathies and sensibilities, tear down the pillars that uphold the proudest fabric ever erected to constitutional liberty, spit with scorn upon the memories of our noble comrades already sleeping the cold sleep of death on soil rendered sacred by being the last resting place of the “Father of his Country;” these recreant, monstrous wretches, who are not fit to live among freemen, must and will soon be visited by retributive justice.

How tremblingly will they stand, confronted by the tens of thousands of our fallen brethren murdered by an infuriated, satanic treason, bearing witness to their apostacy. But I will leave them with an invocation, which I hope they will be influenced by.

For the sake of that future we are now moulding and making, for the sake of that God whose essence is perfect love and good will toward men, for the sake of that religion whose precept is equal justice; for the sake of the past ourspread before you, so replete with patriotic achievements and heroic struggles; for the sake of our mighty present, displaying as it does so many triumphs of our armies, so many bright evidences of our truly Spartan valor, of puritan devotion to truth; for the sake of that liberty which belongs to the meanest of God’s creatures, and which the noblest and proudest of earth have been proud to vindicate; for the sake of yourselves, moral and accountable beings as you are, abandon at once your treasonable schemes, desist from your unholy purposes, discard all base partisanship that loves faction more than country, and gather around the altar of our common country, and bury yourself in true, loyal, heartfelt devotion to its cause.

Do this, and protect yourself from the stings of an insulted conscience. Do this, and save yourself from the curses of angels and men. Do this, that an epitaph on your black-hearted infamy and treachery may not be written over your grave, and the stigma of your wickedness cloud the hopes of your prosperity and posterity; for with you, or without you, the nation must and will succeed, and we as a country will come out of this struggle purified, with noble views, higher aims, and broader and more enlarged ideas of the subject that man is truly capable of self-government. Truly yours,

S. H. S., 5th N. J. V.

National Standard, Salem, NJ
March 25, 1863

[Private Samuel H. Sherron was mustered out on July 17, 1865 and died suddenly on January 2, 1866 in Philadelphia during his forty-fifth year of age. He was brought back to Salem, New Jersey and interred in Saint John’s Episcopal Cemetery.] —JHB

Membership Report

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- Betty Waddington
- Andrew Girtain
- John Lore
- Kim Hitchner
- Janet Anderson
- Marcia Clark
- Michael Cox
- Deva Scheel
- Betty Waddington
- James Rupert
- Nancy Lyons

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- Groundskeeper** : *William Jackson*
- Newsletter** : *Harlan Buzby, Ellen Morrissey, Richard Guido, Andrew R. Coldren*

The members of the A.U.M.P. Church at Cedar Grove, are to be congratulated upon the fact that the church is now out of debt, the Trustee's having paid to Thomas M. Taylor this week the last claim against them. The church has had a hard struggle, but they have labored faithfully, each one doing his part with the result stated.

The Monitor, Woodstown, NJ, December 12, 1884

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Salem County Historical Society!

Name _____ New Member Renewal

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Please check your desired category

- Student \$10
- Individual \$25
- Family/Household \$40
- Partner \$100
- Sustaining \$150
- Contributing \$250
- Lifetime \$500

We also have Business & Corporate Membership Opportunities!

- Oak Tree Associate \$100-\$249
- Pedersen Providers \$250-\$499
- Goodwin Providers \$500-\$999
- Fenwick Benefactors \$1000+

For more information on how your business can become members of the Society, please call 856-935-5004

Please make checks payable to the Salem County Historical Society. The Society now accepts credit card payments for new memberships, renewals, and upgrades through our secure website: www.salemcountyhistoricalsociety.com

RETURN TO: SCHS, 83 Market Street, Salem, NJ 08079

—The twenty-fourth annual commencement of the **Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania**, took place in Horticultural Hall, Philadelphia, on Wednesday last. The President conferred the degree of M. D. on a number of graduates, among whom was **Miss Mary Emma Robinson**, of this city.

National Standard, Salem, NJ, March 22, 1876

SALEM COUNTY HAS FIRST GRAND JURY FOREWOMAN

Justice Black appoints a woman, **Mrs. Isabella Chew**, wife of William W. Chew, to guide deliberations in the Grand Jury Room, shattering all precedents in the courts of New Jersey.

Salem Sunbeam, Salem, NJ, April 22, 1921



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—Mr. George W. Pettit, a noted artist of Philadelphia, but a native of this city, has just completed a beautiful picture called "The Cremation of Julius Caesar," which has been pronounced by competent critics to be an excellent work of art.

National Standard, Salem, NJ
March 22, 1876

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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 57, 2012

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Enclose \$5.00

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Salem County Historical Society

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