

THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

A.B. Reading Telephone Co.



Figure 1: Subscriber Telephones Advertisement, 1905

An Interesting History by John E. Parse, covering 34 years of his express business from Flemington to New York (July 6, 1916).

The Reading Telephone Company has given me work for many years. A friend has furnished me with the following information regarding the Company.

In 1894, H.E. Deats built a Private; telephone line to connect his office in Flemington with his home at Flemington Junction. An instrument was also put in Bodine's store for Mr. Deats' convenience. A year later Mr. W. N. Burgess built a line from his home at

East Lynne Stock Farm to Flemington Junction depot. C. Lloyd Fell was agent there at that time, and boarded with the late Charles Alpaugh. There was an unused wire on the Lehigh Valley Poles into town which he obtained permission to use, and the line was extended to Mr. Alpaugh's house, and later to Kline's hardware store. In 1898, Asa B[owman]. Reading, who then lived at the Junction, put in a small switchboard, connecting the Deats and Burgess lines, and started a telephone exchange for the accommodation of the neighborhood, no charge being made. The demand for service became so great that on April 1st, 1900, he moved to Flemington, occupying the house at 47 Spring Street, installing a fifty-drop switchboard, and starting in the telephone business in earnest. He has averaged about 225 subscribers most of the time. He has been assisted by Mrs. Reading [Clara Hoff] and their two daughters [Eva May and Leona] and a son [Harry], and has continued to give telephone service to the citizens of Flemington and vicinity ever since. He was the first to give night service here. Attracted by Mr. Reading's success, the Merchants' & Farmers' Telephone Co. was organized, and now pretty well covers the county. Later the New Jersey Telephone Co., a subsidiary of the Bell system, was started with headquarters at Lebanon, and also built in to Flemington. The town is unique in having three separate telephone systems, not connecting with each other. Several attempts have been made to , considered feasible, so each still attends to its own business.

Asa B. Reading sold his company to the aforementioned New Jersey Telephone company in 1922.

Ed. Note: Asa B. Reading was born June 17, 1867 in Pittstown to Oscar Reading and Hannah Bowman, and died on June 5, 1935 at age 67. Hiram Deats, founder of the Hunterdon County Historical Society and a lifelong resident of Hunterdon County lived for many years at Flemington Junction, where he operated a farm.

Newsletter history

This newsletter is the 25th edition of the Mount Amwell News. Past issues index shown below.

Vol. 1, No. 1 - Fall 2007 - *Gov. John Reading's Silver Tankard* by David Reading documents the evidence that it was made in NYC refuting the claim made in Leach's Genealogy that the tankard was an heirloom brought from England.

Vol. 2, No. 1 - Spring 2008 - *Meet the Ryerson's part 1* by William Luken provides a history of the Ryerson family from its beginning in New York.

Vol. 2, No. 2 - Fall 2008 - *Dr. Fred Lathrops's Hunterdon Cemeteries*, examines Dr. Lathrops's research and documentation of Hunterdon cemeteries.

Vol. 3, No. 1 - Spring 2009 - *Wescott Family and the Reading Burial Ground, The death of Deborah "Debo" Westcott and the Westcott family ashes.*

Vol. 3, No. 2 - Fall 2009 - *Col. John Reading's Proprietorship. Marfy Goodspeed's research reveals that Col. John Reading was not the original proprietor - it was his father.*

Vol. 4, No. 1 - Spring 2010 - *Dr. Lathrops's Database On-line!* The MTAP has put Dr. Lathrops's data base on our web site after a year's effort converting tp spreadsheet formats.

Vol. 4, No. 2 - Fall 2010 - *For Love or Loyalty - Richard Reading sides with the British* by David Reading discusses the issues and motivation for Gov. John Reading's son Richard to join the loyalist side in the Revolution.

Vol. 5, No. 1 - Spring 2011 - *Art Patron Barbara Harrison Wescott—Connected to National and Local History* by Jerry Rosco presents a short biography and documents Barbara's influence on Hunterdon's history.

Vol. 5, No. 2 - Fall 2011 - *Shippen House or Not?* By David Reading examines the relationship between the Reading house and the Shippen house outside Flemington.

Vol. 6, No. 1 - Spring 2012 - *The Civil War Death of Joseph Johnson, and True Jersey Blues* by Dominick Mazzagetti.

Vol. 6, No. 2 - Fall 2012 - *Major Samuel Reading and the Society of the Cincinnati.* George Reading's son is founding member of the New Jersey chapter.

Vol. 7, No. 1 - Spring 2013 - (1) *Slacktown Cemetery.* MTAP proposes preservation to the Kingwood Township and (2) Princeton University Reading Family Collection.

Vol. 7, No. 2 - Fall 2013 - Hunterdon 300th. Review of MTAP events supporting the Hunterdon 300th.

Vol. 8, No. 1 - Spring 2014 - *MTAP Establishes Chapter* for Swackhammer volunteers.

Vol. 8, No. 2 - Fall 2014 - *John Reading and the Creation of Hunterdon County* by Marfy Goodspeed. Lecture as part of Hunterdon 300th event.

Vol. 9, No. 1 - Spring 2015 - *George Reading's Search for Peace* by David Reading. The heartbreak and courage of a Revolutionary and Indian War patriot.

Vol. 9, No. 2 - Fall 2015 - Mount Amwell Project Members Participate in Hugely Successful Second Annual Cemetery "Cemenar"

Vol. 10, No. 1 - Spring 2016 - *Lance Ashworth to be Keynote Speaker.* President of the Friends of the Fishkill Supply Depot speaks at the MTAP Cemenar in 2016.

Vol. 10, No. 2 - Fall 2016 - *Cemenar's Workshop Recommends New Jersey Cemetery Board Provide Regulatory Authority Over Historic Cemeteries*

Vol. 11, No. 1 - Spring 2017 - *Executive Director David Reading selected as Member of the West New Jersey Council of Proprietors*

Vol. 11, No. 2 - Fall 2017 - *Swackhammer Stabilized!* The efforts to finish the clean-up of the Swackhammer are memorialized.

Vol. 12, No. 1 - Spring 2018 - *Howell graveyard now owned by the Borough of Stockton, Leased to the Mount Amwell Project.*

Vol. 12, No. 2 - Fall 2018 - *Is This a Lenape Burial Mound? Possible Indian burial found during Howell clean-up.*

Vol. 13, No. 1 - Spring 2019 - *Flemington's Early Telephone Systems.* A.B. Reading and Hiram Deats.

*A large part the Mount Amwell Project efforts to preserve the memory of Hunterdon's early settlers is by preserving and protecting the cemeteries in the County where many of our ancestors are buried. It has become fashionable today to refer to these mainly northern European people as White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs). While it's true that most were Protestants, they had ancestry's that included Celtic, Roman, German, English (Anglo-Saxon), Scandinavian, Irish, and Scottish. Frank L. Greenagel has provided us with a succinct account of the composition of Hunterdon Settlers in his book, *Less Stately Mansions* on page 19. Frank has graciously given permission to include his text here (ed.)*

Where the Settlers Came From

"The evidence is inconclusive about the earliest settlement of the county, but it would be fairly certain to say that it was the Dutch coming from East Jersey, non-Quaker English from Middlesex and Monmouth, and English Quakers who filtered in from Burlington. William Penn and his associates had purchased land from the Indians in Kingwood and Alexandria in 1677. Surveyors started appraising the fall of the streams, mineral outcrops and meadows cleared for Indian corn by 1688-1689, according to Snell and the first settlers are likely to have been second-generation Quakers coming from Burlington, or perhaps directly from Hull, England. A bit later, more Quakers moved into the county from the region served by the Burlington Monthly Meeting. George Fox, who founded the Society of Friends, owned land near Rosemont.

Readington may have been settled as early as 1700, but most Dutch-speaking families came into the area from Long Island about 1712, according to Snell. Many of them were younger sons who left crowded homesteads on Long Island to establish their own farms in the county. Another account puts Dutch settlers in Hunterdon as early as 1684, which is possible but I think unlikely. A large portion of the earliest Dutch settlers here were probably descendants of the first settlers of East Jersey and Long Island and few are likely to have come directly from the Netherlands as Dutch migration ended with the English takeover of New Amsterdam in 1664.

Virtually all the early place names reflect English names and locations, except for those with Indian names. By 1704 there were Baptists from England in the area of Hopewell and the Amwells, and early settlers were certainly in Ringoes and Lambertville by

1705: Ferries between New Jersey and Pennsylvania were soon established at Stockton and Lambertville.

By 1714, there were enough settlers in Amwell to form a company of militia. Also within the first two decades, 1704-1724, settlers began arriving from the eastward by way of the Raritan and its tributaries. These were the Dutch, and included Huguenot and Walloons and perhaps Germans. ... Quakers from Burlington County settled in the vicinity of Quakertown about 1730. English and Scotch Presbyterians lived near Ringoes and Mount Airy at an early date. ... A new element in the settlement of Hunterdon made its appearance between 1715 and 1720. In this interval began a trickle of German settlers across the southern border. This was soon to become a torrent, so that Germans, by the mid-18th century, accounted for a large segment of Hunterdon's population.

By the 1740s there were many Scotch in the northern part of the county, so many that the Royal Governor of Jersey feared that Quakers and Dissenters (Scotch Presbyterians) would fill up the whole of the west area to the exclusion of the establishment-favored Anglican Church. The next waves of settlers were Germans coming up from the Philadelphia area, and the continued infiltration from the east of Scotch-Irish, English, and Dutch. The Germans from the Palatinate emigrated following the devastation of the War of the Spanish Succession by the armies of Louis XIV of France (1701-1714), but many English-speaking settlers who left England and the continent, some by way of the Netherlands, did so to escape oppressive religious establishments in England, Scotland, Ireland (Ulster), Germany, and France. Their interest was not in founding religious colonies, but in finding a place where they could farm; if they had a trade, where opportunity for economic security seemed more promising than in Europe. In that respect, they were different from the Puritan settlers who moved down from Connecticut and Massachusetts into East Jersey, and from the Quakers moving into Burlington, whose motivations were largely to find freedom to practice their own form of religious intolerance.

There were few Catholics in the county until the 1840s, when Irish Catholics arrived in Lambertville, Hampton and Flemington as laborers and domestic servants. Even then, visits by a priest in Trenton were rare until establishment of Catholic churches in those towns in the 1850s. The first Catholic Church in the state was not organized until 1814 in Trenton. It was founded largely by French refugees, many of whom soon converted to the more politically acceptable

Episcopal faith. Snell claims that "no county in the state had so mixed a population after about 1745, composed as it was of Huguenots (largely French), Hollanders, Germans, Scotch, Irish English and Native Americans; that is hardly true, most of the eastern counties had a similar ethnic composition."

Site Stewards

Trevor Oldenburg has agreed to be the site steward for the Slacktown cemetery in Kingwood Township and Jeff Barnes will be the Steward for the Reading Burial Ground. The two additional stewards gives us 100% coverage for our six cemeteries.

Web site

The web-site continues to undergo an upgrade. We have added a "Projects" menu item where we will provide status and history of the various cemeteries under our responsibility. Several small problems have been corrected after our move to Bluehost. Bluehost also provides a though metrics tool to track visitors. We had 4151 unique visitors to the site between November 2018 and March 2019.

RBG Agreement

Jack Thompson, new owner of the Rosemont farm executed a Memorandum of Understanding on March 13, 2019 granting the MTAP the right to maintain the Reading Burial Ground continuing a 13 year history of restoration and preservation. Additionally the MTAP will manage visitor access to the private property site.

Cemetery Tour Event

On Sunday, June 2nd, the East Amwell Historical Society, jointly with the Mt. Amwell Project is sponsoring a cemetery tour of four East Amwell cemeteries – Union Cemetery on Boss Rd., Amwell Cemetery at Larison’s Corner, Pleasant Ridge Cemetery and the Stout-Manners Cemetery in Wertsville. Tickets are \$25 which will include the cost of the bus and a reception back at the Museum when the tour is complete. Space is limited. Make your reservation by contacting Gloria Wargo @ 908-782-1601.

Death of Eugenia Klein



Long time MTAP member Eugenia Ann Klein, age 90, died on July 31, 2018, at Dolan Memory Care, Conway House, in Creve Coeur, MO. Eugenia was born in New York City in 1928 into a publishing and literary family. In 1966, Eugenia went to work for the C.V. Mosby Company, a health sciences publisher in St. Louis, Missouri. In 2003, her significant contributions to medical publishing were recognized when she won the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Medical Publishers Association. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch on Aug. 12, 2018)

Grant Award

In October 2018 the MTAP submitted an application for a GOS (General Operating Support) grant to the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission under a re-grant program from the NJ Historical Commission. The County Board of Freeholders approved a grant of \$1,000 on February 19, 2019. This amount was significantly less than what we had requested.



The Mount Amwell News
The newsletter of the Mount Amwell Project
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Published Spring and Fall

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The Mount Amwell Project received an operating support grant from the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission, with funds from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.