New Slide Shows

"Monmouth County Place Names" made its debut at the Keyport Historical Society on April 6 and will be shown again at the Shrewsbury Historical Society on May 21, 8:00 PM, at their museum on the southwest corner of Sycamore Avenue and Route 35. It outlines the process of place name research.

A Part II of "Middletown: Then and Now" is progressing. Most of the older pictures are gathered one or two at a time, often from snapshots or post cards. Slides and copy prints are made from originals, which are returned if the owners want them. Additional views are needed. Please call Randy Gabrielan at 671-2645, or write the Society, if you can help.

New Members

for 1986

Anthony Cabelo
Richard Weiner
John G. Wood
New Monmouth
Brielle, N.J.
Red Hill

for 1987

Joseph and Marie Anania
John and Bette Bates
David and Pauline Boyd
Bonnie Brower
Jane Denton
Mary Ann Dziezyc
Julia Dodd
John Gallo
Margaret Gunke1
Ramon Maxson
George and Mary Alice Moss
Gregory Orr
Edwin Phillips
Louis and Jean Schlauffman
Richard Silverton
Elizabeth Tindall
Middletown
Middletown
Leonardo
Middletown
Tinton Falls, NJ
Eatontown, NJ
River Plaza
Lincroft
Oak Hill
Locust
Rumson, N.J.
Leonardo
Toms River, NJ
Vero Beach, FL
Matawan, NJ
Colts Neck, NJ

A Study of a Historic House

The Township of Middletown hired an architect to make a historical structure report on the Whitlock-Seabrook-Wilson House, popularly known as the "Spy House". Short and Ford, historic project specialists, issued their findings in late 1986. The partial summary here is intended to give wider circulation to the commendable project.

The building is owned by the Township. The house is the subject of numerous legends, including the incorrect one that was a center of Revolutionary War spying activities. "Spying", or observation of enemy naval movements, was done from Garrets Hill, now part of the Navy's Earle Chapel Hill facility. The report's purpose is to document and illustrate the buildings original and later appearance, document present condition, provide a detailed architectural description as part of the building's permanent archival record, and to identify conservation and restoration needs and priorities. The three methods used were examination of older and current pictures, historical records, mostly from primary sources, and on-site physical examination.

The findings indicated that the western section is the oldest. It is on the left of this drawing by Charles Detwiler, which was not part of the study. It projects the appearance after the last of three sections (on the right) was added, but prior to the late 19th century addition of a second story by Reverend Wilson in the middle section. Evidence based on settlement patterns and the movements of Thomas Whitlock, the house's first owner, support a date of no earlier than 1686. Short and Ford indicate that parts of the building are structurally fragile, that interior finishes are deteriorated due to age and weather (noticeable after a short visit by any casual observer) and that inappropriate elements have been added over the years compromising architectural integrity. They recommend that this important building be preserved and restored in a historically appropriate manner. They also note that archaeological potential of the site merits consideration of such work when opportunity arises.

The oldest part of the house is attributed to Thomas Whitlock. He was likely English and settled with his English wife at Gravesend, in the Dutch colony of New Netherland, now part of Brooklyn, by 1654. Whitlock and others visited what became the Monmouth bay shore in 1663, seeking suitable settlement sites. The Dutch colony fell
to England in 1664, facilitating the expansion of English settlements. Whitlock arrived in 1664. His first residence cannot be conclusively determined, but the Short and Ford report and a preponderance of evidence indicate it was in Middletown village. The earliest evidence of Whitlock ownership of bay shore property is 1676, when the East Jersey Proprietors recognized his rights to eight parcels of land. Whitlock had dual residency in Monmouth County and Westchester County, New York from 1678 until 1686. He likely built his bay shore house no earlier than 1686, a date backed by various secondary sources and reinforced by a 1687 road record that recorded the formal opening of a road connecting Middletown village and the East Jersey Proprietors recognized his rights to eight parcels of land. Whitlock sold the house to his step-son Daniel Seabrook in 1696, but apparently lived there until his death in 1703.

The record reveals little about Daniel Seabrook after 1696. By 1717 the property was controlled by James Seabrook, either the son or brother of Daniel. The house was owned by a succession of Seabrooks until 1855. Seabrooks were active in municipal government and were prominent Township citizens. Thomas Seabrook was a major and later a lieutenant colonel in the New Jersey militia during the war. However, documentary evidence is scant and the spy stories are unfounded, fanciful fiction. Shool Harbor was, however, the landing site of British troops in April 1779, who made well-documented local raids.

Seabrooks were active and prospered in maritime trading. One, Thomas Seabrook, drowned in 1740 while a ship passenger on Long Island Sound. Another, Henry Seabrook, left the Middletown home in 1839, settling in Keyport, then part of Middletown Township, where he was a respected member of the Baptist church. There he died in 1854, leaving his estate to his widow, Anna Whitlock, and his son, Thomas Seabrook, in 1855. Seabrooks were active in the local militia during the war and exhibited significant military service. One, Thomas Seabrook, was a major and later a lieutenant colonel in the New Jersey militia during the war. However, documentary evidence is scant and the spy stories are unfounded, fanciful fiction. Shool Harbor was, however, the landing site of British troops in April 1779, who made well-documented local raids.

The architectural investigation employed several techniques including physical investigation, sketching and measuring, preparation of room survey sheets and photography, the latter two methods providing a graphic record of site observations and examination of material samples. The investigation was not conclusive that Whitlock built the 17th century oldest part of the house standing today.

The two main sections are a two story flat roofed section on the west and a two and one-half story gable roofed section on the east. The former is the original house and is on the left of our pre-final expansion sketch. A flat roofed porch extends from the western section. A lean-to shed is attached to the western end. The house is clapboard covered with a series of varied size window. The floor plans and physical data provide an excellent aid to understanding the building. Only the first floor is reproduced here and in a much reduced size. The floor plans and physical data provide an excellent aid to understanding the building. Only the first floor is reproduced here and in a much reduced size.

The eastern section is estimated to have been built in phases in the latter part of the 18th century. The second story addition likely was made no earlier than 1798. The center section was raised to two full stories in 1855. The C.1800 construction is dated by the flooring nails, fireplace openings and floor joists. Later modifications leave little original finishes.

The center section was raised to two full stories by Rev. Wilson, perhaps in two stages, late in the 19th century. The historical record of the later additions are better recorded, through a painting and a photograph.

The report outlines needed work with relative standards of need. The Township is progressing with repairs.
The report concludes that although the house has been altered often and was victim to questionable efforts at restoration, it is still suited to its role as a museum for history of the bay shore.

The Tourants is to be commended for seeking the best professional guidance to help resolve these often clouded historical and preservation issues.

The Lenape Revisited

Herbert C. Kraft, New Jersey's foremost archaeologist and researcher of the Lenape Indian recently reviewed his "The Lenape - Archaeology, History and Ethnography" 303 page book. His slide talk "The Lenape - Correcting the Myths and Misinformation" and the book give a deeper, more accurate view of the Lenape and his times. It is particularly recommended to viewers of the Society's Indian exhibit of 1986-

Studying the Indian is made difficult by their having no written language. In addition, most early accounts of them are by European observers, who were prejudiced against our natives. The visitors thought them to be savage. Dr. Kraft used four sources of evidence, including writings of early Europeans, attempts at through the area. A second was reports of missionaries, who were often free of explorer-settler style prejudice. The Moravians were close observers and one, David Zeisberger, spent sixty years among the Indians and recorded many details of their everyday life. Indian remembrances was a third source, but the most insightful evidence was obtained by archaeological searching. Archaeology is useful only for evidence that can survive in the soil. We will never learn more about their physical appearance and dress, Indian songs and dances, mythology and Indian interpersonal relationships. But an enormous body of knowledge was taken from the ground.

Basic misconceptions about the Lenape include their name, tribal or group organization, and travel patterns. Lenape is a word of the Unami dialect with various meanings including "original people". It does not mean "original people". Lenapi Lenape is redundant. "Lenape" is sufficient and is used throughout the book. The Lenape lived in nearly all of New Jersey, northern Delaware, Pennsylvania west to the Susquehanna River, southeastern New York to the Kingston area and on eastern Long Island. Historical maps of the Indian period usually divide Lenape lands among three tribes, each with an animal symbol. They are false recreations and the names are not known in early Lenape use.

The entire Lenape settled area is called Lenapenoking meaning many of territory is wooded, a major factor in shaping how the Lenape lived. Environmental and cultural differences make the Lenape as different from Plains Indians, such as the Cheyenne and Sioux, and from Pueblo Indians, such as Hopi and Zuñi, as are major European groups different from one another. Dr. Kraft describes two major diversions of Lenapes, groups along settlement and spoken language lines. A northern group, or Munsees, in New Jersey above the Delaware, Manhattan and in southern New York spoke a Munsee dialect of the Lenape. Second are separate Lenape with distinct identities including the Caumicksack, Hackensack, Rockaway and Wanaumawagonng. They also included the Noxesink. A southern group, or Unami, settled near or in territory influenced by the Delaware River including central and southern New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware. These bands spoke an Unami dialect, had different customs and included the Brandywine, Naratkonock and Schuylkill.

The names Munsee and Unami do not have long Lenape use. Munsee first appeared in colonial Pennsylvania records in 1727. There is disagreement on its meaning. Munsee is traditionally defined as "people of the stony country", but some believe it means "on this island", originating from Indians living north of the Delaware Water Gap. Unami, meaning "person from down river" first appeared in 1757. Its reference is south of the Hatterian River, Pennsylvania north to Eastern and northern Delaware. A third name was mis-used for a New Jersey group, Unaalactigo. It first appeared in 1769-1773 to identify Lenapes living in or near Ohio.

All Indian names are not of traditional origin. Schuykill is Dutch. The Lenapes are also known as the Delaware Indians. Delaware stems from an Englishman, Sir Thomas West, the third Lord De La Warr. Sir Samuel Argall named the bay for Sir Thomas, who was also governor of Virginia colony. In 1660. The name Delaware was later applied to the natives of the wide surrounding area.

Archaeology requires undisturbed sites, which were found on both sides of the Delaware, particularly in Warren County, New Jersey. Much is learned from human remains. The soil also tells about food, housing and life styles. The evidence indicates that life was difficult and death early.

Lenape society was structured along family lines. Lineage was followed through the maternal line. The Lenape took the pragmatic view that one could definately ascribed identity of a mother. Knowledge of the father was not always definite. The Lenapes married early, the females at perhaps, thirteen or fourteen, and the males around seventeen - nineteen. A short life expectancy made early marriage a near necessity, if one expected to see his children mature. The Lenape had a division of responsibility by sex. The female was highly respected and owned the family home, despite the male having built it. She had a major food procurement role, probably obtaining a majority of it though cultivating crops and gathering wild growths. The male, however, brought in the protein through arduous hunting. Marriage was informal and divorce easy. The woman owned the home and she could let the husband know it was over between them by leaving his possessions outside the house. He could simply walk away from home and marriage. Indian life was based on mutual need, so one thought carefully before accepting early style "no fault" divorce.

Idealized stratigraphic profile of an archaeological site. The plow zone (level A) has been disturbed by centuries of plowing; historic objects are mixed with prehistoric artifacts and tops of features are obliterated. The plow sole (interface) represents the contact between the disturbed upper portion and the undisturbed subsoil levels. Lower features, such as postmolds and refuse pits, sometimes intrude into earlier levels, thereby disturbing the context of the more ancient deposits. Each layer (levels B-I) becomes increasingly older until bedrock or the bottom is reached (level J). Sterile layers (levels F and H) caused by flooding or wind deposition sometimes help to separate periods of occupation.

Reprinted by permission, Herbert C. Kraft.
Proper archaeological excavation requires a careful removal of small levels of soil. The site is eliminated in the study, making photographs and measurements the record of the project. A different tale may be told by many layers of earth. The study of the evolution of a society. Different farming, hunting, and food preparation implements trace changing lifestyles. Early Indians hunted or gathered wild food; cultivation of crops evolved later. Early meat meals were prepared by roasting or baking. Pottery was first used around 1000 BC, which expanded cooking possibilities to include stews and broths. Many objects were used as tools rather than weapons of war. Farm implements replaced stone.

Many were disturbed after becoming smooth. Their development helps trace agricultural history. Food included corn, beans, squash, and fish. The bones of the latter are readily identifiable. Bones of the ears are often found having been processed for the extraction of marrow. Intact pottery is rare with only three examples found in New Jersey. Lenape pottery is round-bottomed, requiring three to more to support themselves in a standing position by their tops. New Jersey pottery was never painted. Ornamentation was by geometric patterns impressed in the clay by sticks or bones.

The region around the Highlands of the Navesink has traditionally thought to be a destination for seasonal distant travel by Delaware River area Lenapes. Two historic Indian routes are claimed to have ended in what became Middletown Township. Part of the Minisink Trail became Highway 45. Much of the Minisink Trail was in County Route 537. Both ended around the Navesink River. Shellfish were thought to be the Lenape’s object. However, fresh water clams were abundant in the Delaware. There is no evidence of widespread summer migration for fish. The Lenape were certainly more inclined to visit our shores for clams than would a Middletownites travel to Philadelphia for fish dinner at Bookenders when so many fine sea-food restaurants dot our river and bay.

The Lenape established an early trade relationship with the Europeans. It was based on mutual need of materials plentiful to the others. The Lenape found strange the Europeans’ great desire for fire, which could be had merely for the hunting and preparation. The whites were delighted to trade commercially available products such as metal cooking tools and vessels and beads. Archaeological evidence has given revealing insight into the latter. Indians were thought developers of wampum made from shells. Few beads were found among early Indians. Wampum was developed after Europeans introduced the metal drill. The Dutch and English were not permitted to coin money and needed a medium of exchange acceptable to European and Indian. An elaborate system of wampum was developed, complete with creating, stealing, grave theft, counterfeiting, and an attempt to import European manufactured wampum unacceptable to the Lenapes. Glass beads and other common European ornamentation were popular with the Lenape.

European trade practice created a social change in Lenape life. Indian groups were governed by communal authority. Europeans were accustomed to dealing with a leader. One was appointed to fill this trade role and from it the position of chief evolved. Interaction with Europeans and their different values brought the Lenape dispersal from their land, disease and death. Indians did not hold land exclusively, believing it was there for the use and enjoyment of all. The Indians regarded the price or goods Europeans offered for their land as a goodwill gesture or as payment for usage rights. The resultant removal of the Lenape from his traditional land nearly obliterated their culture from New Jersey. Indians had always died young. Dr. Kraft estimates a 95% mortality rate by age 5. The Indians had no knowledge for treating minor ailments. Child birth took a toll. He rarely finds Indians surviving past the age of 35 or 40, contrary to inaccurate claims of longevity by early European writers. Disease introduced by the Europeans decimated the Lenape. Small pox was the greatest scourge, with measles and diphtheria also claiming many. Indians had a living for alcohol beyond their ability to handle it, with deadly result. The Lenape population at the time of European settlement is estimated at only eight to ten thousand, a number readily consumed by the twin ravages of disease and dispersal.

Archaeology is also revealing about burial practice. The Lenape placed the body in a flexed shape, ostensibly returning it to a fetal position. The pragmatic Indians were actually making a smaller bundle for burial. Straight positioning came after exposure to the white man. Indians were respectful of the dead and were especially concerned for their spiritual well-being. They were not fearful of the corpse and would re-bury some who died away from home. They were buried at the site of death, but after decomposition of a year or so, the bones would be stacked and shipped home for re-burial.

The book is important to all area local historians. It is not only a detailed description of our native settlers; it redefines the basic knowledge needed for an understanding of them. Herbert C. Kraft’s “The Lenape” may be ordered from the Publications Department, New Jersey Historical Society, 230 Ewing, Newark, New Jersey 07102. The cost is $4.95 plus $1.75 postage and handling. NYC has not been planned to sell the book, but could change its decision if enough are willing to pre-pay an order.

Meeting Notice

The April meeting is the 27th, while we meet in May on the 25th, both 4th Mondays. The time is 8:00 at the Museum.

Dues are due.. Are yours paid?

Dues are the key source of Society revenue. We welcome new members. There is no obligation with membership, but we also welcome new participants in Society activities. Dues are only $5 and $10. We are pleased to distribute sample newsletters and hope they attract those willing to offer their support.

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DEDICATED TO RESEARCHING, COLLECTING AND EXHIBITING THE HISTORY OF MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP.

Museum: In the main building at Croydon Hall on Leonardville Rd. between Chamone and Bellevue Aves. in the township’s Leonardo section. Open Saturdays & Sundays.

Meetings: 8:00 PM at the museum, generally on the fourth Monday with occasional exceptions for major holidays.

Donations of historical materials: Please see a museum guide or write to the Society.