Christmas Traditions at St. Mary's Hall

It was 1837. Martin Van Buren was President and Queen Victoria ascended the throne. On the banks of the Delaware River, a hill town in western New Jersey, a girls' school was founded. Named for George Washington Doane, the second Bishop of Ohio and a man of letters, a rector, a patriot and a host of ideas and traditions. There was no more beautiful Hall than the celebration of Christmas.

By 1840's, Bishop Doane invited the students to his table, on the Feast of the Epiphany, for a Twelfth Night. It was observed by succeeding Bishops - each in his own time. The Bishop's Feast celebrates the anniversary of his consecration by giving the students a special meal. The celebration was known as the "Bishop's Feast." One's imagination pictures the white-capped Juniors, who from year to year had been chosen, and the group of Seniors in cap and gown, and theScarborough dispensing gracious hospitality. Many who were heard about the excellent music, the delicious food and the lovely manner of the girls." In later years, the Bishop's Feast was marked by speeches by the Bishop and distinguished guests. The celebration of the Junior banner and after dinner entertain-

ment. It is one of the most beloved traditions at St. Mary's Hall and will be remembered always as an evening of good fellowship and cheer. Sadly, it ended in the 1950s.

The school has already celebrated Christmas for 169 years, and the most important custom carried from year to year is the Christmas Mystery, or the Nativity. It began as a pageant in the 1800s, as a project for all the boarding students who could not travel home for the holidays, and then in 1930 it became the format that we use today - complete with script and instrumental music. This year will be the 76th consecutive performance.

The Chapel of the Holy Innocents, designed by John Notman (a famous Philadelphia architect) and located on the campus, is decorated by the seniors with garlands of laurel, and the altar with poinsettias and lighted candles. The account of the 1936 "Ivy Leaves" describes the performance as, "The chancel is hung with curtains to form the stage; and intermingled with the singing of the Carols and the reading of the story of the Nativity, there are four scenes, with dialogue and singing, set off with effective lighting. It is done with such simplicity and with beauty, moving to those taking part and to those in the congregation, that people gather to see it from near and far.

The Mystery lasts one hour, and as soon as it is over, the party dresses are put on and the girls appear in festive mood for the Christmas party.

This year they entered the dining room with the brightly lighted Christmas tree at the end, the tables arranged down its length in semi-circle to the fire burning brilliantly on the hearth. On each table was a miniature tree hung with silver rain, and lighted by two large red candles, and small candles at each place. Around the tree were presents and verses for everyone. From turkey and cranberry sauce to plum pudding, the dinner was gay."
A Falsely Signed Scrip Note from Jobstown

By David D. Gladfelter, NLB

Shown here is a typeset merchant scrip note, unlisted in Wait, that was made up during the Panic of 1837 for use by an unknown local storekeeper in Jobstown. Its frame appears to be printed from a woodcut, with portraits of Washington and allegorical laureled heads at the sides. At top center appear the arms of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, probably indicating that this note came from the shop of a Philadelphia printer. Its fabric is an unusual stiff paper.

Jobstown is an unincorporated hamlet within the rural Township of Springfield, Burlington County. It was formed in the late 18th century and named after Job Lippincott, an early settler and tavern keeper. Gordon's Gazetteer, published in 1834, tell us that it then contained, besides the tavern, "a store, and 8 or 10 dwellings, surrounded by excellent farms." It does not appear too different today. The store was opened by Jack Horner and was located in the forks of the Monmouth Road and the Columbus-Jobstown Road. In Scott's 1876 atlas of Burlington County, the site of the store is shown at the northwest corner of the forks, opposite what is today Tilton's "Country Store."

This particular example, ex Chet Krause, is falsely signed "Napoleon Bounaparte." We know for sure that the signature is false for two reasons. The real Napoleon spelled his surname without the U. And he died in 1821, 16 years before the note was printed. Because of this signature, Rulau considers this note to be satirical and has listed it as such in his catalog of Hard Times tokens and scrip since the 3rd edition of 1887. I'm not sure that was its purpose. Rather, it may have been to encourage acceptance of the note in local commerce. Banks of that era made their circulating notes payable to famous persons, living and dead, such as George Washington or Henry Clay. Possibly the Jobstown store owner, Jack Horner or a successor, thought that his notes would be trusted if they were not just payable to a famous person but actually signed by him (supposedly).

Napoleon himself never visited America, but his elder brother Joseph did. Joseph, who as a result of his brother's political maneuvers had enjoyed a short-lived and nepotistic reign as the King of Naples and later of Spain, came here in exile from France in 1816 after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. At Bordentown, a few miles north of Jobstown, Joseph purchased a country estate of 1,400 acres on the bluff of the Delaware which he named Point Breeze. He built an elegant mansion with a lake and formal gardens, and entertained lavishly.

Magee reports that "all the distinguished Frenchmen who came to this country were his guests, as well as many of the exiles from France. To Bordentown came Lafayette, Girard, Clauzel, Lallemand, Desmonettes and others equally distinguished. Among the great men of this country whom he entertained were Clay, Webster, [John Quincy] Adams, Commodores Stewart and Stockton, and General Scott." The mansion was destroyed by fire in 1820, was rebuilt but is gone today. Joseph, who was well liked by his Jersey neighbors, went to England in 1839, suffered a stroke there, and died in Italy in 1844. In his memory Bordentown is called the King City.

The name of Bounaparte was therefore well known and expected in the vicinity of Jobstown at the time this note was issued.

The 1876 atlas shows several farms near Jobstown owned by members of the White family, the surname of he note's payee. The largest farm in the area, still intact today, was the stock farm of the New York tobacco merchant P. Lorillard. It was described as having "a number of fine blooded stock, and the finest appointed stables and buildings in the State."

[originally published in Jerseyana, July 2003]
Burlington County Historical Society Recent Events

On October 1 a birthday party was held for Captain James Lawrence. The ship-themed cake was provided by Pemberton Township High School bakery.

Captain James Lawrence cuts the cake.

November 5 speaking about "Ben Franklin in Paris".

Picture Yourself With Us!

Photos from the November 19 Charlie Breining presentation about his experiences as a pilot with the Flying Tigers in
Butt Our Town is Buddtown

By David D. Gladfelter, NLB

We New Jerseyans have to put up with our state being the butt of many jokes. It doesn’t stop. Joe Pesce and Robert DeNiro just added a new one to the string with their entry in the state slogan contest: “New Jersey: You got a problem with that?”

So I decided to check out these red lithographed notes from “Budttown, NJ.” Were they yet another joke, or for real? Who was Reuben Stratton and where was “Budttown”?

The answer is found in Woodward’s History of Burlington County, published in 1883. There it is stated that about 1860, “a store adjoining the Methodist Church was started and carried on by Reuben Stratton” in Budttown, a village of about 150 inhabitants, situated in Southampton Township, Burlington County, on Stop the Jade Creek, a tributary of Rancocas Creek. (Tradition holds that the creek’s name comes from farmers chasing a wild horse or “jade” down the stream calling “Stop the Jade!”)

Budttown hasn’t changed much in the 143 years since Reuben Stratton’s scrip was issued. It was then, and is now, a farming community, located on Ridge Road (present day County Route 543) between Pemberton Road (Route 616) and Ongs Hat Road (Route 642). “Around the town is one of the most fertile farming sections of Burlington County, of which it is partially the centre of trade and repairs,” wrote Woodward.

The Budttown United Methodist Church building is still in use today, but nothing remains of Stratton’s store. What kind of store was it? Census records state that Stratton, a native New Jerseyan, was a tailor. In 1860 he was 33 years old and resided with William H. and Eliza Budd, probably descendants of the original settler Thomas Budd. Ten years later, Stratton and taken a wife, Mary and had two daughters, Anna, 7, and Ella, 1. His house was assessed for $1,000 and he rented rooms to a family of 3.

The two notes shown here are unlisted in Wait and are the only ones known today. Is anyone surprised? The tall ships on them are picturesque but would never have made it up Stop the Jade Creek.

[Originally published in Jerseyanna, April 2006]
John Brainerd: Founder of America’s First Indian Reservation

In 1759 Brainerd, John Woolman taught here at one time.

Boss South Jersey was still a sparsely populated area, with the Lenape Indians still living there. These Native Americans were forced to live in small, isolated communities due to the arrival of settlers. The Lenape Indians were also known to be skilled in the use of boats and had a strong connection to the rivers and streams in the area. They were known for their agricultural practices, which included growing corn, beans, and squash. The Lenape also had a complex social structure, with leaders who were respected for their wisdom and knowledge of the natural world. Despite their traditional ways, the Lenape faced significant challenges as European settlers began to expand their territory into what is now New Jersey. This led to conflicts with the Lenape, who were forced to move to more remote areas in order to protect their way of life.

Britain, Brainerd came to high hopes. His brother, missionary whose expulsion religious reasons led to the action of the action against the newly formed church. John, however, was more successful in his endeavors. His letter shows that he had to “supply (preach) at more than a half dozen places on the Lord’s Day and preach lectures on other days at nearly twenty places, so large is this desolate country.” Eventually there were a number of preaching stations called “Brainerd’s churches.” There was one at Bargaintown, where Zion Methodist Church now stands, and also one at Long-a-Coming (now Berlin).

Some of Brainerd’s activities in the Batsto area included attending to the sick, giving prayer and psalm-reading and spending an evening settling a disagreement between a man and his wife, “bringing them to accord with Gods help.” One day, en route to Wading River, he lectured to people working at a boatyard and “spent time bodily laboring with the company clearing land, but taking care that they had not too much strong drink.” Eventually, small pockets of civilization began to emerge from the Pine Barrens. In 1775 Brainerd advised Reverend Philip Fithian (who led the Greenwich Tea Party) that the people at Elijah Clark’s Meeting House were nice in taste concerning preaching, expecting good speaking, god sense and sound divinity and from ministers with neatness and cleanliness in dress.

John ministry in the Pines was supported by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. Between his Sunday preaching schedule, he made his home with the Indians. He both ministered to their needs and defended their rights. His diary recorded some of his work with the Indians: “Rode down country to settle an Indian affair and then to Bridgetown (now Mount Holly) to consult respecting Indian lands at Wepinck and the cutting of timber by white men.”

This concern for the Lenape led to the first Indian reservation in U.S. history, in Burlington County. Brainerd induced the colonial government to purchase 3,044 acres from Benjamin Springer for use by the Lenape (there were only about 500 left in 1760). The Indians called it Edgepillock; Brainerd called it Brotherton; today it is called Indian Mills.

Brainerd envisioned a working, self-supporting community, and soon a settlement of several houses, a church, a school, a gristmill, and a sawmill were built. Unfortunately, Indian Mills only lasted for a few decades. Brainerd died just before the War of Independence. Most of the Lenapes left for upper New York state in 1802. The life of John Brainerd – missionary to the Pines – is just one more chapter in the history of one of America’s most historic regions, little South Jersey.
Traditions
continued from page 1

According to the March 1947 "Ivy Leaves," "On December 19, 1946, the English dining room in Scarborough Hall never looked lovelier. Ropes of laurel were strung along the walls and hung from the gas lit chandeliers. Pine branches and holly were placed on the mantelpiece over the blazing fire and in front of the fire was a living room scene. The table decorations consisted of large white candles in the center, surrounded by pine branches and holly, with a little snowman marking each person's place." The lighting of the plum pudding was greatly anticipated, as was the ceremony of the Yule Log, which dates back to the days of the Vikings. Its flames were believed to burn out all wrongs and heartaches and to end feuds. The log meant good luck and future happiness, and just to ensure its potency, the charred remains of the log were saved to light next year's log. Carols were sung, poems and stories read, and one could always feel the never failing spirit of the lovely Christmas traditions that prevailed throughout The Hall. This event continues to this day.

Elsie F. Slater, principal of St. Mary's Hall from 1953 to 1974 writes in her 1961 Christmas letter, "One hundred and twenty-five years ago, Bishop George Washington Doane lighted the first Christmas candle at St. Mary's Hall. What thoughts must have passed through his mind as he prepared to celebrate this first Noel at our school - gratitude for the opportunity to prove that education for women had merit, thankfulness that this new venture had had such an auspicious start, concern for its ultimate success and solicitude for the young women entrusted to his care and for their distant families.

Our school has been truly blessed. One hundred and twenty-five years have come and gone - happy years and sad years, years of plenty and years of depression, years of war and years of peace, but no year has passed when the Christmas candle has not been lighted. Once more our school prepares to honor the Christ Child's birth, in spirit in the Chapel and in fellowship at the Christmas Mystery Dinner."

And so, another holiday season is about to unfold at St. Mary's Hall, with the glorious 15 foot tree in the ante-chapel, the hallways bedecked with garlands and burgundy bows, and the forest of white lighted trees in the dining room. Every year that passes is a testament to the passion and vision of George Washington Doane. The principles on which he founded his dream live on in the sons and daughters who are sharing in this Christmas.

The trustees, faculty and students wish you peace and joy for this festive season.

St. Mary's Hall/Doane Academy is a coed college preparatory school for grades pre K-12, 350 Riverbank Ave, Burlington, NJ. Call (609) 386-3500 for information.

Burlington County Historical Society Hours

Hours of operation: The Burlington County Historical Society is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Tours of the entire complex including the Bard-How, James Fenimore Cooper and Captain James Lawrence houses, the museum gallery exhibits and library are $5 for adults, $3 for children under 12.

Admission just to the museum exhibits and library is $3 for adults, $1.50 for children under 12. We offer group and school tours by appointment and can accommodate groups up to 100 people. The BCHS facilities can also be rented for meetings and cocktail parties.
“Felon” and “Gravel” Questions Answered

Last month we asked our readers to tell us what “Felon” and “Gravel” were. Doris Meeder sent in an excellent reply which we would like to share with you.

She found a description of gravel in an old medical book, “There is such a thing as the formation of small stones in various internal organs of the body. This is strictly and properly what is called the disease of gravel…”

Doris, also, found the description of “Felon” in the Webster Dictionary as follows: Felon – a deep usually supplicative inflammation of the finger or toe especially near the end or around the nail.

Thank you Doris for answering our question to the readers.

The following Poem was found in the manuscript collection given by the Moon family.

- Author unknown -

God's bank ain't busted yet

The bank had closed; my earthly store had vanished from my hand.

I felt there was no sadder one than I in all the land.

My washer woman, too, had lost her little mite with mine.

And she was singing as she hung the clothes upon the line.

“How can you be so gay?” I asked, “Your loss don’t you regret?”

“Yes, ma’am, but what’s the use to fret?

God’s bank ain’t busted yet.”

I felt my burden lighter grow, her faith I seemed to share;

In prayer I went to God’s great throne and laid my trouble there.

The sun burst from behind the clouds, in golden splendor set;

I thank God for her simple words

“God’s bank ain’t busted yet.”

And now I draw rich dividends, more than my hand can hold,

Of faith and love and hope and trust, and peace of mind untold.

I thank the giver of it all, but still I can’t forget

My washer woman’s simple words:

“God’s bank ain’t busted yet”

Oh weary one upon life’s road, when everything seems dear,

And loss born on every hand, and skies seem not to clear,

Throw back your shoulders, lift your head, and cease to chafe and fret.

“God’s bank ain’t busted yet.”