

Freehold Township Heritage Society

Winter2023

President's Message

Winter is upon us. Playing music outside has ended for now, the harvest is gathered and preserved. Now is the time to look back fondly, and look forward with anticipation.

In 2022 the Freehold Township Heritage Society-along with the rest of the world-did its best to recover from the pandemic and figure out how to move forward. We had a good year, with a fully occupied Community Garden, successful Yard Sale, a wonderful Garden Tea, and a Craft Show. Old Time musicians continue to make merry music at our Oakley jams, often with 15 or more musicians attending. We had a musical afternoon and schoolhouse storytimes sponsored by Center Players. The 4th New Jersey held a Civil War tea and ran drills on the grounds. We opened the Wikoff Burial Grounds for an afternoon in October, and were happy to meet local history aficionados there.

Eagle Scouts worked on the grounds, including painting the woodshed, painting furniture and cleaning the patio, fixing the water collection system, transplanting raspberries, and cleaning up the grounds. We very much appreciate their work and dedication.

FTHS raised enough money to do extensive repairs and add a new roof to our woodshed. The Freehold Township Historic Preservation Commission has also been making great strides on the Henderson Barn preservation project. It was a good year to be a historic building in Freehold Township.

Next year we hope to produce more events of interest to Freehold, to educate, entertain, and yes, raise money to continue our mission. In the works are craft classes-possibly basket weaving and inkle loom weaving, and more. The play Meet the Oakleys will be produced with Center Players, performed at the house. The Freehold Township Historic Preservation Commission has applied for a grant to repaint the Georgia Rd schoolhouse and replace the shutters. We are working on a schoolhouse tour day with other local historic schoolhouses: Old Wall Blansingberg School, Ardena Public School #2, Montrose Schoolhouse, Court Street School Education Community Center, and our own Georgia Road and West Freehold Schoolhouses. We are investigating more ways to work with other organizations, schools and the community.

And we need YOU! To continue in our mission to help preserve and promote Freehold's historic sites, your membership and support means everything. We thank you for your continued interest.

We wish you all the joy and happiness of the season,

Denise Warren

President, Freehold Township Heritage Society

Court Street School Education Community Center

Kyle D. Warren, Ph.D.
Secretary, Board of Trustees
Court Street School Education Community Center

The Court Street School is one of the principal structures associated with the segregated history of early twentieth century education for African-Americans in Freehold, New Jersey.

The original school was organized in 1915 exclusively for the education of African-American children by the Freehold Board of Education. It was a one-room wooden building located just west of the present site. The existing school was constructed in two phases, in 1920 and 1926. All African-American children in Freehold were educated at Court Street School from kindergarten through eighth grade until World War II, when the school was used as an air raid shelter and a ration station.



Under pressure from war veterans, a court order integrated the school and it reopened for kindergarten through third grade in 1949. The school closed in 1974. In 1990, the Court Street School Education Community Center, Inc. was formed as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, to restore the school for use as an Education Community Center and to preserve as an African-American historic landmark.

The group received a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust and the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders to restore the facility. In 1995, the building became an official historic site in the state of New Jersey, and was placed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

The school now operates as a community education and historical center.

www.courtstreetschool.com

Local One Room Schoolhouse Upcoming Tour

By Maureen O'Connor Leach

- ~ Commissioner - Monmouth County Historical Commission
- ~ Treasurer of the Country School Association of America

As New Jersey is preparing to celebrate the United States' Semiquincentennial in 2026 we are reminded that Monmouth County played an important role in events leading up to the Declaration and during the War of Independence. But our heritage is not limited to battles and history nor is it limited to the Founding Fathers or grand acts. The early settlers cleared and farmed the land, fished the waters, and built the mills, churches, schools, and homes we still treasure today beginning traditions that continued for the centuries.

Fortunately, several historical societies in Western Monmouth have worked diligently to preserve some of the one room schoolhouses that were built between 1815 to 1915. We see these remaining edifices as testament to the importance our forebearers placed on the need for education was in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. Each school tells a part of the story of the development of education in the County.

Freehold Township Heritage Society has proudly maintained and restored not one but two early schoolhouses; these are the only 2 original schoolhouses remaining in the Township. West Freehold School sits on its original 1847 site on Wemrock Road just off of Route 537 and near Oakley Farmhouse. The schoolhouse displays many period artifacts including desks from the turn of the century, a class attendance list from the late 1800s, and the original wood floors. The Georgia Road School dates from 1735 and has recently been beautifully refurbished and now also houses period furnishings. The Society is now working to complete the process which will add these two sites to the National Register of Historic places.

Mark your 2023 calendars! These two FTTHS schools along with four others will be open to visitors on Sunday April 16, 2023 from 10 AM to 3 PM. The schoolhouses on this self-drive tour in addition to the FTTHS sites are the 1812 Montrose School (Colts Neck), the 1915 Court Street School (Freehold Borough), the 1855 Old Ardena School (Howell), and the 1855 Blansingburg (Wall).

More information on the history of the schools and a map with details of the self-drive tour will be available at Oakley Farmhouse and in the March newsletter as well as on all of the schools' Facebook pages/websites in early 2023.

More information on the Court Street School is available elsewhere in this newsletter and the following sites offer some interesting details on these schools.

Old Ardena- <https://www.jerseyshoreonline.com/howell/historic-schoolhouse-has-new-owners>

Blansingburg- <https://walkerhomeschoolblog.wordpress.com/2021/06/02/blansingburg-schoolhouse-old-wall-historical-society-allgor-barkalow-homestead-museum-wall-nj/>

West Freehold Schoolhouse



209 Wemrock Rd, Freehold Township

Old Wall Blansingberg School



1663-1699 New Bedford Rd, Wall Township

Georgia Road Schoolhouse



Georgia Rd & Jackson Mills Rd, Freehold Twp

Montrose Schoolhouse



Corner Cedar Dr & Montrose Rd, Colts Neck

Ardena Public School No 2



Old Tavern Rd & Preventorium Rd, Howell

Court Street School Education Community Center



140 Court Street, Freehold

Slavery in Freehold?

By Rick Geffken

Like many of us educated in New Jersey public or private schools during the 20th century, I never heard that the abomination that was slavery happened in the North, too. I do remember being taught that enslavement of “negros” was confined to those backward-thinking southern states. And that the Civil War was fought over States Rights – each state’s legal authority to decide what it allowed its citizens.

Watching The Million Dollar Movies night-after-night presentation of *Gone with the Wind* only reinforced those concepts to me and my contemporaries. Thank God the North was triumphant and freed those poor slaves! End of story.

It was only a decade ago when I began exploring our Monmouth County history that I was forced to change my thinking, I realized what we’d been taught about slavery was incomplete - whitewashed out of New Jersey history everywhere. Pouring through numerous references at the Monmouth County Archives, as well as online, I was astonished to find an entire group of human beings and New Jersey citizens who were never mentioned during my school years.

I was reading real estate transactions, Church records, and Last Wills written by people bequeathing their “negroes,” to their heirs. For example, in 1768 Freehold’s Hendrick (Henry) Robinson left his daughter Charity a “negro wench, named Catharine, which my father gave to me.” His father James Robinson, owner of five slaves, appeared on a list of slaveholders three years later. The Robinsons were obviously multi-generational slaveholders. And they were hardly alone in that regard.



Henry Robinson's widow was the former Anna Rhea whose own father, David Rhea, bequeathed her "my negro girl Sarah" in his 1760 Will. David's Last Testament goes on to read: "I give unto my said son Robert Rhea my negro girl or child Lydia and at the decease of my said wife, my negro man Frank, and unto my said son John Rhea, my negro boy Titus. I also give my said son Jonathan Rhea my negro man Bristol. At the decease of my dear wife (Anna Forman), my negro wench Liss. I give unto my son David Rhea, my negro boy Umple." More about this last mentioned son later in this article.

In October 1771 "A List of the Negroes in Freehold taken by James Wilson, Constable" was filed at the Monmouth County Clerk's office as part of a county-wide census, now preserved at the Monmouth County Archives in Manalapan. One hundred and fifty-eight Freehold slaves belonged to prominent local families such as the Covenhovens, Formans, Parkers, Schanck's, and Smocks. Most of these slave masters were men who held from one to four slaves of both genders, all unnamed. But "Hannah Taylor, Widow" also appears as the owner of one man and one woman slave. Comparing some of the slaveholders on the 1771 List to their subsequent Wills and Estate Inventories sometimes leads to the actual identities of the enslaved. For instance, Kenneth Hankinson's (1731-1807) two men and two women slaves on the 1771 list might be the Tone, Dick, Hester, and Nanny in his 1807 Will.

Deeper research revealed that David Rhea, Jr.,

brother of the above-mentioned Anna Rhea

Robinson, served as an Artillery Colonel at the

Battle of Monmouth in June of 1778, and was

appointed Monmouth County Sheriff in 1785.

David Rhea (1740-1821) never married and

continued his family's slaveholding traditions –

his maternal ancestors were also slaveholders.

Four Dollars Reward.

RAN away from the Subscriber living in Dock-street, N^o 59, on Sunday the 11th inst. an indentured Indian mulatto boy, named ISRAEL TOLMEN, whose father was a white man, and mother an Indian; by profession a chimney-sweeper, and about nineteen years of age, five feet nine or ten inches high, hallow face, and very slender made, black short hair hangs about his neck, with brown eyes. Had on when he went away, an old calico coat, corduroy breeches, old hat and shoes; and it is expected he will change his cloaths.—He formerly lived with Col. Ray, and Mr. Samuel Turman, at Monmouth in Jersey, and is capable of telling a good tale, and has travelled much through the Jersey, and was born in Allen Town. Whoever takes up said runaway, and secures him in any gaol, so that his master gets him again, shall receive the above reward, and reasonable charges.

RICHARD ALLEN.

Philadelphia, Sept. 12, 1791.

N. B. All masters of vessels and others, are forbid harbouring or employing him at their peril.

A 1791 ad for a runaway slave, published in the ironically named Freeman's Journal on September 12th, showed that enslaved people in our state history were not exclusively Black. Indigenous Lenape/Munsee were enslaved as well. Any combination of mixed race people were called "mulattos."

The advertisement reproduced here is only one of dozens of runaway ads which appeared in the Philadelphia newspaper between from 1781-1792. Other colonial papers are loaded with hundreds more runaway ads. The backstory to this particular ad, placed by Richard Allen, is particularly informative in several ways.

We know that slaves of the period were frequently given the family names of their owners, yet no standard Monmouth County reference work, nor Federal Census record, shows a Tolmen family. Notice that Israel had lived with "Mr. Samuel Turman," another unrecorded local family name. Who was the Col. Ray "at Monmouth in Jersey" whom Israel Tolmen, born around 1772, once lived with? And who was Israel's "white father?" Spelling in newspapers of the time was notoriously capricious, but the aforementioned David Rhea, Jr. of Freehold was first cousin to a Samuel Forman (1738-1817).

Samuel Forman married his cousin Margaret Forman in January of 1772, just about the same time his mulatto slave Israel was born. If Samuel Forman had previously impregnated a Lenape/Munsee slave he owned, the child may have been light-skinned and resembled his father. The wide-spread abuse of female slaves by their white masters happened everywhere. Another word for that abuse is rape. Let's engage in some social speculations.

The 21-year old new bride, Margaret Forman might have been embarrassed by the presence of a baby who looked like her husband, especially since the child was not hers. Samuel Forman would have anticipated this awkward situation and gave or sold the slave child Israel to his cousin and friend David Rhea. In turn, David Rhea knew he could realize a profit by selling Israel to Richard Allen, especially after Israel developed the unique and valuable skills of a chimney sweep.

Samuel Forman's Will, written in 1806, mentions several slaves, among them: "the negro girl named Terry...the boy named Joe...the boy named Tom. And, notably, "My aged slave named Dinah." Might Dinah have been a Native American, the "Indian" who gave birth to Israel 34 years before? It's certainly possible.

What would Israel's life have been like? Born into slavery, and quickly sold and separated from his enslaved mother and a white father he never knew, his story would not be uncommon in 18th century New Jersey. He had no black blood and grew up looking more like a white man – “five feet nine or ten inches high, hallow face, and very slender made, black short hair hangs above his neck, with brown eyes.” Whatever his countenance, Israel did not resemble slaves of African descent, and would also be noticeably different from his mother's Lenape people.

Like every slave, Israel dreamed of escaping bondage. He was an outsider by birth, by heritage, and by the cruel enslavement wherein he was sold multiple times during the first two decades of his life. But his specialized occupation also brought him into contact with many white people when he cleaned their chimneys. Maybe he found a family sympathetic to his situation, a family who provided temporary shelter and who had the wherewithal to help him escape.

Like so many men and women in these runaway slave ads, there is no recorded follow-up indicating if Israel was ever found let alone returned to Richard Allen. We don't know if he completed a successful escape. Maybe he made his way north to New York, then to Canada. We'll never know.

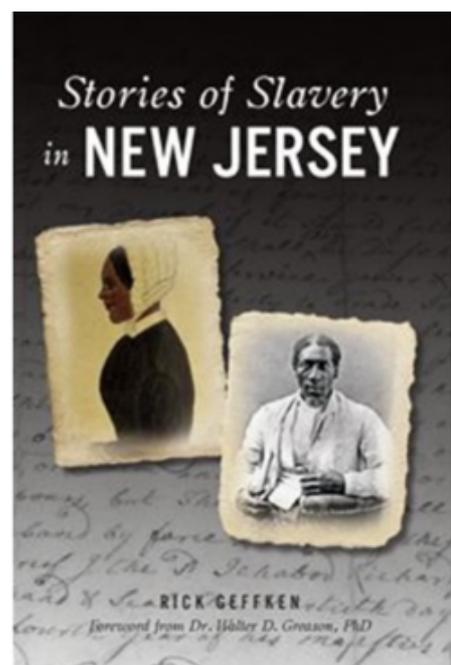
The sad legacy of enslavement throughout New Jersey lasted two-hundred years.

When the 13th Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution put an end to slavery in 1865, the Garden State was the last northern one to ratify it.

This article was adapted from Rick Geffken's latest book, *Stories of Slavery in New Jersey*,

(The History Press, 2021). Signed copies are available by contacting him at rickg0817@yahoo.com.)



THE WOODSHED

THE WOODSHED RESTORATION PROJECT AT OAKLEY FARM
HAS BEEN COMPLETED

After many months of research and decision-making, we have finally completed this restoration project. The woodshed dates to the late 1700s or early 1800s. Originally, it would have stored the wood needed to keep the house warm and for cooking. The building now houses the tools needed for our Community Garden.

The East end of the building had started to separate, so it was pulled back together and secured. The window on the South side was losing panes. We were able to buy a window at a local salvage yard to replace it. The new door was something we had salvaged from one of our historic houses that had to be demolished. It's not actually the type that would have been there as that would have been solid wood. The reason we chose this new/old door is because it lets more light into the building for the gardeners. It is still historically correct due to its age.

Typically, woodsheds would have been packed to the rafters with wood to use throughout the year. It was a constant job to keep it filled. When coal started to be used for cooking, it was much easier and lasted longer. Later on, people decided to use coal for heating as well.

Below are pictures of the woodshed before and after the restoration. This project was completely paid for by funds raised by the Freehold Township Heritage Society.

When we first started looking at roof replacements, we felt that cedar shakes would best fit the time period. The cost started out at \$8,000.00 in January 2022. By the time we contracted for the job in late July 2022, the cost had risen to \$13,000.00 due to circumstances beyond anyone's control. With repairs to the building and window replacement, the final cost came in at approximately \$16,000.00.

The building exterior was cleaned and painted by a local Boy Scout who is working on his Eagle Scout award.

come a member

The building will last another 100 years at least.

Our fundraising events have made this necessary project possible. Many thanks to everyone who attended our events, have become members, or donated money. This restoration has come to fruition because of you!

Cheryl Cook Polverino

FTHS Liaison - Freehold Township Historical Preservation Commission



Woodshed before restoration



Separation of the Building



Restoration Completed

MANY USES OF THE WOODSHED

Our woodshed on the historic Oakley Farm and museum was restored during the past year. Some of my memories from the 1950's include that woodshed and preparing the Oakley house for the winter.

Perhaps a woodshed is a misnomer. Surely it was stacked full of firewood to prepare many of the early families who have lived at the farm for the winter. After the installation of the coal burning boiler, that fuel was delivered and stored in the basement of the main house.

In the 1950's when my great-aunt Lizzie was alive, the building was the storage place for another winter ritual, storm windows. Each window in the Oakley house had a fitted storm window that weighed about 20 pounds and was numbered for each window in the house. A project that took a full day's work for 2 people. Taking off the summer's screens, storing them in the woodshed and replacing them with winter's storm windows.

In the 1960's the more modern storm windows replaced the full-length storm windows of the previous era. The woodshed was no longer needed to prepare the house for the changing seasons. It fell into disrepair.

Today it is storage for our active community garden, restored for the next generations' use.

Richard Smith, Ph. D.
Secretary

FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP HERITAGE SOCIETY'S VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

FTHS wishes to thank and honor our Volunteers of the year for 2021 and 2022. They have spent many hours tirelessly working events, creating newsletters, repairing our website, and really anything we asked of them. We very much appreciate you!



To the left -
Volunteers of the
Year 2021
Simon Kowerski
Olivia Raguseo

To the right -
Volunteer of the
Year 2022
Maryann Apostle
pictured with Cheryl
Polverino





PUZZLE CORNER

4th NJ Civil War Reenactors Christmas in the Field

Jigsaw puzzles were invented in 1767 as an enjoyable pastime. Playing these puzzles has a variety of benefits.

In child development, jigsaw puzzles help develop fine motor ability, eye-hand coordination, problem-solving skills, spatial awareness. and concentration.

In adults, benefits include improved memory, improved visual-spatial reasoning, increased attention to detail, lower stress levels, and improved mood.

Below are some puzzles for you to solve. The links for them are found below. If clicking on the link doesn't work for you, type it or copy and paste the address in your browser.

A window will open with puzzle pieces. Pieces are moved with your mouse. You can change some things if you want as listed below:

- **Play As** drop down menu at the top right. Each picture included here is set for pieces. **Here you can change the number of pieces if you want to make it easier or more difficult.** You can also change the shape of the pieces here.
- **Share** drop down menu next to Play As. You can send the puzzle in an email or other ways.
- **Maximize** button in the bottom right corner will make the puzzle fill your screen.
- **Several Buttons** in the bottom left corner give you choices including Restart. You can also choose to put up a Ghost Image, which shows a faded copy of the picture you are working to solve.
- **Timer** is in the bottom center.
- **Home, My Puzzles, Saved Games, Explore, and Create** at the top left allow you options.
- **Create** is where you can create a jigsaw puzzle from your own photos.
- Once you solve a puzzle, a Restart circle appears in the bottom left corner if you want to do it again.

The links below will bring you to

Susan Cooking Over the Open Fire

tinyurl.com/j5v5bjhf

Civil War Santa

<https://tinyurl.com/2bd3we5f>

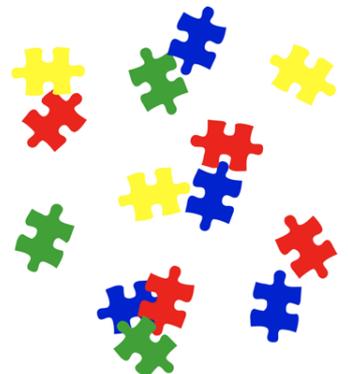
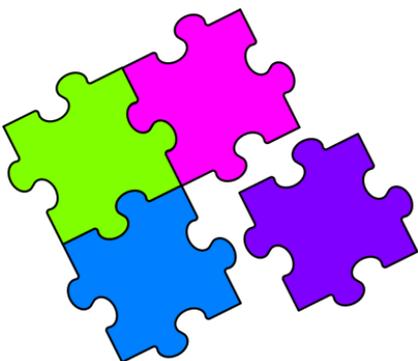
Tents and Soldiers

<https://tinyurl.com/2s3hunzm>

Give it a try...Enjoy!

Pat Eisem

Vice President



Freehold Township Heritage Society

189B Wemrock Road, Freehold NJ 07728

732.577.9766

email: ftheritagesociety@gmail.com

2023 Membership form

Name

Address

Phone

Email

_____This donation is made in the name or memory of _____

Please fill out the top portion of this form and return it along with your check to the address above. Make all checks payable to: Freehold Township Heritage Society

Cut here - - - - -
- - - - -

Keep this bottom section as a Tax receipt - 2023

2023 membership made to Freehold Township Heritage Society in the amount of \$
on

(date)

Suggested donation:

\$20 per year per person or \$25 per year per family
\$50 per year Business/Organization

Supporter Levels:

\$100 Patron
\$250 Gold Member
\$500 Platinum Member