



Kingston Historian

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

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Spring 2017

The KHS spring meeting talk Tuesday, June 6 to feature Farming in the Millstone Valley.

The talk will be given by Judy Peters, president of the Van Harlingen Historical Society at the **Kingston Fire House** on Heathcote Road, Kingston **Tuesday, June 6 at 7:30 pm.**

In her talk Ms. Peters will show historic photographs from the Van Harlingen Image Collection, anecdotes from travel and farm diaries, oral histories and much more that describe the many who farmed this area. Farmers who were our early settlers sustained their families and community with their produce. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and share experiences about farming.

A recent history of Franklin Township by Bill Brahms describes farming as having gone through three distinct phases and now superseded by a phase of housing development and businesses. Many communities, like Kingston, can identify with these changes.

The first phase, which consumed the first settlers until the early 1800s, was characterized by the clearing of land and self-sufficiency.

The second phase from 1810 to WWI was characterized by production for the market, which was made possible by improved transportation, by new techniques and new farming machinery, which made possible increased



The Schuler farm on Laurel Avenue; poultry farming was very popular in the early 1900s. Photo from KHS Archives

production. Farming became more organized and commercialized after the Civil War. Print media spread information, while Rutgers, which became New Jersey's land-grant college in 1864, developed and spread new agricultural techniques; agricultural societies like the Grange fostered improved contact among farm families.

The third phase from WW I to the mid-1950s was characterized by increased use of motor trucks for transportation and an increase in the types of jobs available to local residents and in the use of automobiles. The impact of "electricity" on farm development changed it immensely.

After World war II, increased agricultural production in the Midwest (and improved transportation from it) and the increase in New Jersey's population, which resulted in massive housing development, led to radical changes in land use in NJ including a drastic decline in farming in central New Jersey.

Exhibits at the Locktender's House: Farming and a Tribute to the Fire Company Auxiliary.

In conjunction with KHS's spring talk, there will be an display about past farms in and around Kingston. During the summer there will also be an exhibit on the Kingston Volunteer Fire Company Ladies Auxiliary in honor of its 90 years of service to the Fire Company and the community.

Kingston Businesses Walk to be led by George Luck in the fall.

George Luck will again lead us on a walk and talk. This time he will focus on our businesses. It will be an enlightening discussion of past and present; businesses are the core of any successful community. While Luck will focus on businesses of people buried in the Kingston Presbyterian Cemetery, he will also discuss recent businesses. This walk and talk will be **a not to miss event for Kingston.**

KHS would like to thank the person, or persons, who planted the welcoming spring bulbs around the Locktender's House.

The KHS Historic Contribution Award will be announced at the June meeting.

KHS House Fund

Recently the money from the House Fund has been spent on refurbishing the first floor Locktender's House windows. There are additional windows on the second floor and the Toll House door that need repair or replacement, but the KHS has had to put these improvements on hold until more funds are available. (At one time KHS was allowed to sublet two upstairs rooms to a tenant; the money from that sublet provided much of the funding for the House Fund; unfortunately, we are no longer allowed to sublet.)

Kingston: from a village of farmers to one of residents working at the Quarry, Princeton Nursery and in Princeton.

A quick study of Federal Census records from 1850 to 1940 has shown a huge change in occupations of Kingston people, as well as, where they were born. Because census records give birthplace of the person and their parents, we can see these origins over time.

Starting about 1900 there begins a change in what people name for their occupation.

In 1850 the most common occupation was Farmer or Laborer with several Shoemakers, Carpenters, Blacksmiths, Wheelwrights, or Domestic. Most people are from NJ, but some, especially Domestic are from Ireland. We note that Jeremiah Drake was a Lock Tender in 1850 and 1860.

In contrast, occupations in 1900 and after include Bookkeeper, Nurse, Warden, Bottler, Mason, Custodian, Plasterer, Construction, Quarry, Clerk, Plumber, Driver, Waitress, Gardener, Janitor, Publisher, Mechanic, Gas Station Attendant, many Nursery Laborers, and many other occupations including farmer; however, there was a big drop in farmers between 1920 and 1940.

Archiving, Website and Contact Forms

Doug Miller, KHS Treasurer, also has other skills, which are of great benefit to the KHS. He is our Website manager and photo archivist. You can see

his work on the KHS website at "khsnj.org" or just Google the "Kingston Historical Society, NJ" for a look at some of the photos in the Sincak Collection. There are other collections, too, under the "Menu" section of the website. This is a beginning of what he will make available, soon.

Meanwhile, Ceil Leedom is arranging items in the KHS paper archives from Anne Zeman, Doug Kioovsky, Doug Potts, George Luck and many others that have contributed print or other items to KHS.

Contact Forms, also on the KHS website, allow site-visitors to ask questions about Kingston and its history. One recent question spurred us to research the "T.W. Fisk" sign that appears on a photo (c. 1910) of what is now the Eno Terra building. The question: what did "T.W." stand for?"

We learned that there were two Thomas W. Fisks; they operated a meat market and grocery store in Kingston, but at sometime lived in Princeton. In both the 1900 and 1910 census they lived on the Franklin Township side of Main Street. In 1910 the census listed the older Fisk as a "Grocer." Other newspaper articles refer to him and his son, called William, as "butchers" or "grocery salesman." A son, W.T. Fisk preceded him in death; T.W. Fisk (Sr.) died in 1929 and is buried in the Kingston Presbyterian Cemetery along with other members of his family. Answer: T.W. was for Thomas William.

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