

CUMBERLAND PATRIOT

**Cumberland County Historical Society
Greenwich, NJ**



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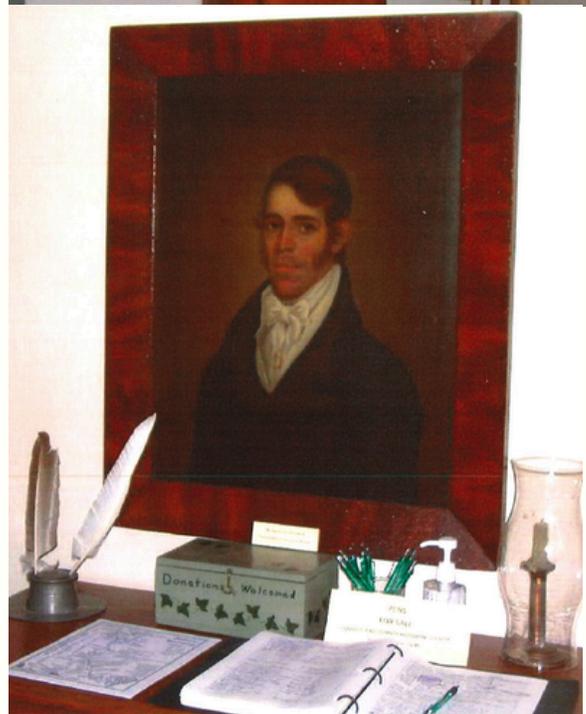
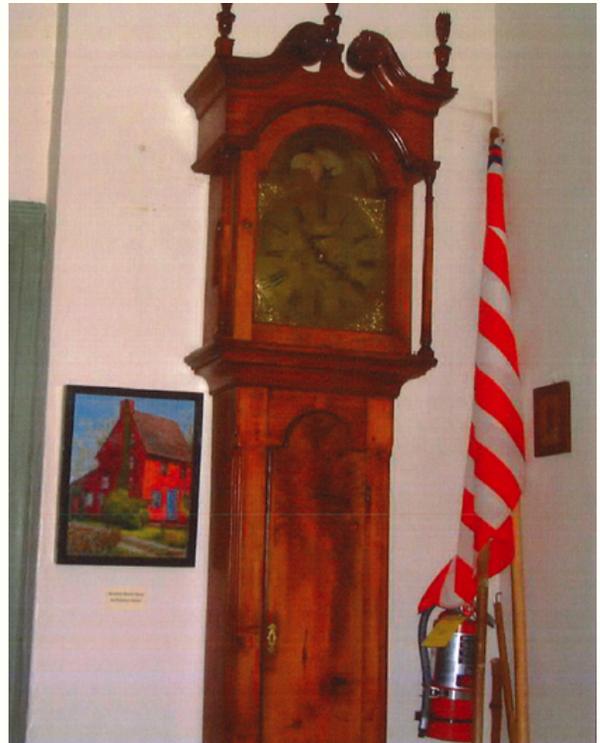
Local Clock Comes to the Gibbon House

By Warren Adams

A clock made by Benjamin Reeve has found a home at Cumberland County Historical Society. Reeve's residence was just five doors south of the Gibbon House. Born in 1737 in Salem, NJ, Reeve ran a business in Philadelphia before moving to Greenwich in 1768 where he built the house on Ye Greate Street. Reeve engraved "Benjamin Reeve, Greenwich" on the dial of clocks made in Greenwich. In 1801, Reeve died in Philadelphia and was buried in the Greenwich Friends Meeting House Cemetery, Greenwich, NJ.

Thanks to Steve Petrucelli, CCHS was able to acquire the Benjamin Reeve clock. Steve Petrucelli operates the Adams Brown clock business in Cranberry, NJ. Recently, he spearheaded the exhibition, "Striking Beauty: New Jersey Tall Case Clocks 1730-1830," at Morven 2023-2024. Petrucelli asserted that the clock should be owned by a historical society. His associate and a friend of CCHS, Joseph Felcone who is a rare book dealer in Princeton and who frequents Greenwich, suggested CCHS to Petrucelli. Since the clock was made in Greenwich, CCHS was the perfect home for it!

The Benjamin Reeve clock is currently on display at the Gibbon House Museum. To the left of the clock is a painting of the Benjamin Reeve House done by Maureen Sapnar, a local artist. Also on display, over a locally made chest to the left of the doorway is a portrait of a Reeve ancestor. Adding this clock to the Gibbon House Museum is an unbelievable event!



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Warren Q. Adams received his BA in Liberal Arts and Business from Oglethorpe University. He started researching at the Lummis Library in 1997. Due to Warren & Reba Lummis, he became Director of the Library in 1998 for an interesting second career.

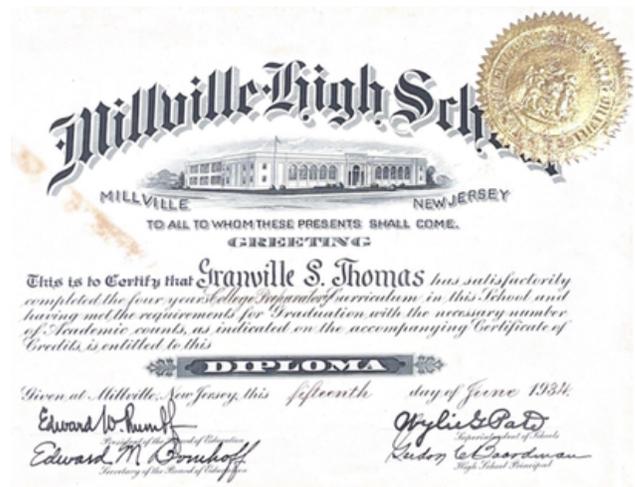
A Teacher Traversing the Tides: The Life of Granville S. Thomas, Jr.

By Tia Antonelli

The Cumberland County Historical Society has recently received a donation pertaining to a Mr. Granville Souder Thomas, Jr., a Millville resident, teacher, and WWII veteran. A special thank you goes to Lucas Dailyda (CCHS Volunteer) and Esteban Portillo for their research assistance, without which this would not be possible.

Granville Thomas, Jr. was born to Granville and Blanche Thomas on July 20, 1916; a few years later the couple had their second son, Phillip. (1) The Thomas family was established and well-liked within their community, frequently making appearances in newspaper notes. In many cases, the family was mentioned vacationing or taking daily excursions to the shore, particularly Ocean City, NJ. (2) Throughout his early education he was a successful student. In June 1934, Granville—then a junior or senior—was awarded the Outstanding Science Student Award by Millville High School’s Science Club. (3) This evident love for education continued after his graduation, when he pursued his teaching certification from Glassboro State College and earned it in 1939. (4) He only

had a few years of teaching experience before enlisting in the United States Army on September 8, 1942. (5)



Thomas’s military service lasted the duration of World War II, though he remained in the continental United States for the entirety. Early in his career, after receiving a physical examination, he was disqualified from overseas service due to a hernia. (6) As a member of the Army Air Corps, which later became the Air Force, Granville Thomas was a key worker in clerical administration and sea-based rescue operations. (7) He was first stationed in Dayton, Ohio, where within a year he moved up the ranks; in late September 1943 he was classified as a general administrative clerk, and roughly a week later, on October 1-2, 1943, he was relieved of his Material Command duty and moved to the headquarters, where he “report[ed] to the officer in charge.” (8) He retained this position until the middle of 1944, when he was assigned to

1. (“Interesting News About People You Know,” The Millville Daily, Aug. 22, 1925.
2. “Jottings,” The Millville Daily, Aug. 4, 1923.
3. “Annual Commencement of Millville High School Held,” The Millville Daily, June 16, 1934.
4. “Dr. Granville S. Thomas, 67,” The Millville Daily, June 18, 1984.
5. Army of the United States Separation of Service card for Granville S. Thomas, Mar. 18, 1946.
6. Form 63 Examination for Granville S. Thomas, c. 1944-45.
7. “Special Orders no. 244,” Memo, Sept. 24, 1943.
8. “Special Orders no. 234,” Memo, Oct. 2, 1943.

San Francisco, California. From mid-1944 to 1946, Granville Thomas bounced around from San Francisco, California, Portland, Oregon, and various stations in Washington state (namely in Everett and Tacoma). (9)

During his service, Granville Thomas married Helen Ryan in 1945. The following year he was honorably discharged from his military service and pursued further education at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. (10) At this time, Helen was a member of the Greenwich Township Board of Education, and by 1950 she was working as an elementary school teacher. (11) The two had a daughter within a few years of being married, and both Granville and Helen continued their careers in education, with Helen an elementary teacher and Granville a high school principal. (12)

From his military discharge until his death in 1984, Granville was committed to the betterment of his communities in South New Jersey, particularly Salem. Examples of this include expansion and development of existing schools—such as the John Fenwick School and Salem Middle School—and the construction of a new Salem High School. He was also committed to ideals of equality. In the late 1960s, Granville spearheaded seminars and roundtable discussions “designed to promote understanding between races, denominations and

economic groups.” (13)

Granville S. Thomas, Jr. had such an impact on his local community that the Salem School Library was renamed the Granville S. Thomas Resource Center in 1975, and five years later the Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce named him the Distinguished Citizen of the Year. Upon his death in 1984, at the age of 67-years-old, Granville requested that “[c]ontributions in his memory ... be made to the Salem Free Public Library.” (14) In life and beyond, he recognized the importance of community and local organizations, notably those associated with education and community care.

MILITARY RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL THOMAS GRANVILLE S.		2. ARMY SERIAL NUMBER 126 181 468 1000	3. GRADE USA	4. TITLE OR GRADE AIN
5. ORGANIZATION 4th Air Force Hq 400th AAF Base Unit San Francisco California		7. DATE OF SEPARATION FROM ACTIVE DUTY 18 Mar 46	6. PLACE OF SEPARATION Separation Base McClellan Field Calif	
8. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 617 Mulberry St Millville Cumberland County New Jersey		10. DATE OF BIRTH 20 July 16	9. PLACE OF BIRTH Millville N.J	
13. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SEQUESTERED See 9		11. COLOR Brown	12. COLOR OF EYES Black	14. HEIGHT IN INCHES 510
15. SEX M	16. RACE Black	17. MARITAL STATUS Married	18. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. Principal Elementary School 86,310	

MILITARY HISTORY

19. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATE 1 October 1943	20. REGISTERED Yes	21. LOCAL & STATE BOARD NUMBER 1	22. COUNTY AND STATE Cumberland County New Jersey	23. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY See 9
24. DATE OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY 1 October 1943	25. GRADE Master	26. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. 0820		
27. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS None				
28. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS American Theater Service Medal World War II Victory Medal				
29. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION None				
30. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED None		31. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE: None DESTINATION: None DATE OF ARRIVAL: None		
32. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION RR 1-5 (D) Par 4 80 23 Hq 4th AF San Francisco California 23 Jan 46				
33. CONTINENTAL SERVICE MONTHS: 5 YEARS: 12		34. FOREIGN SERVICE MONTHS: 0 YEARS: 0		35. EDUCATION (years) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: 8 HIGH SCHOOL: 4 COLLEGE: 4

INSURANCE NOTICE

36. DATE OF SEPARATION 18 March 46	37. HOW PAID X	38. GRADE - DATE OF TIME 1st Lt AC	39. DATE OF LAST PROMOTION 30 April 46	40. BASIC PAY *6.80	41. INTENTION OF RETIREE X
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42. REMARKS (If no space for completion of above items in entry of other items specified on W. 5. Checklist)
**Performed Sea rescue duty outside Continental Limits USA
Lapel Button Issued
ASR Score 36 (2 Sept 45)
Officer on terminal leave from 19 Feb 46 to 18 Mar 46 inclusive**

43. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER BEING SEPARATED
Granville S. Thomas

44. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature)
**D M WOODS
1st Lt AC**

9. "Special Orders no. 128," Memo, May 26, 1944; "Special Orders no. 20," Memo, Aug. 7, 1944; "Special Orders no. 224," Memo, Aug. 12, 1945.
10. Letter to Granville S. Thomas, Sept. 11, 1947.
11. Tax Form 1040 for Helen Thomas, 1945; 1950 Federal U.S. Census, United States Census Bureau.
12. Ibid.
13. "Dr. Granville S. Thomas, 67," The Millville Daily, June 18, 1984.
14. Ibid.

Tia Antonelli has her M.A. in History from Villanova University, is the administrative assistant at Cumberland County Historical Society's Lummis Library, and a docent at The Gibbon House, 1730.

The History of Prohibition in New Jersey

By Victoria Scannella

The Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, and consumption of alcohol in the United States was voted on and passed on January 16, 1919, to go into effect one year later on January 17, 1920. This gave time for merchants, taverns, and other owners of liquor to dispose of their inventory. Some distilleries were safe to continue to produce alcohol to serve the medical field, but most were forced to close. (1) Many different types of liquor became popular as drinks of choice during this time, from high-proof liquor, beer, and wine. Supporters of prohibition argued that drunkenness was a severe problem, leading to crime, abuse, and general violence which was due to the access to grain and corn alcohols. (2)

Much like we know them today, different types of alcohol were preferred by different groups of people, depending on location and ability to make or obtain certain types of liquor. Beer became a popular drink of

choice later during prohibition. Local beer operations had also been uncovered; beer was not a popular liquor being circulated by gangsters because it required certain temperature conditions that could not be met traveling by sea. They also considered it to be a low product for a similar reason, it had to be brewed locally, and therefore, was not as high quality as imported liquor. (3) The more famously known "bathtub gin," allegedly started in Chicago, with the Genna brothers, a gang family who was a rival of Al Capone in the Little Italy area of Chicago. They gave anyone who was interested stills, corn sugar, and yeast, all of which were used to produce their own alcohol. This allowed some to become part of the Genna brothers enterprise, where they would make a profit off of the bathtub gin being produced by selling it to speakeasies. (4) The gin tasted terrible, as it was high-proof alcohol that was watered down. Speakeasies mixed the foul-tasting alcohol with various juices and mixers to alleviate the taste of the homemade alcohol from amateur brewers. Both grocery stores and hardware stores were able to legally sell the necessary materials for producing alcohol because they were everyday objects. (5) Alcohol was also used for research, cooking in restaurants, and other practices.

The choice to ban alcohol had several supporters behind it, specifically temperance leagues that were run by women during the mid to late nineteenth century, continuing into the twentieth century. The

1. J. Anne Funderburg, *Bootleggers and Beer Barons of the Prohibition Era*, (McFarland & Company, Inc: North Carolina, 2014).

2. Ibid.

3. Matthew R. Linderth, *Prohibition on the North Jersey Shore: Gangsters on Vacation*, (Arcadia Publishing: South Carolina, 2010).

4. Ibid.

5. J. Anne Funderburg, *Bootleggers and Beer Barons of the Prohibition Era*, (McFarland & Company, Inc: North Carolina, 2014).

organizations believed that alcohol was the reason for the destruction of people and marriages, therefore deeming alcohol evil. Many of those involved in the temperance movements believed that alcoholism and drunkenness essentially paved the way to hell; others were progressive and wanted the nation to prosper, and that could not happen if the American people were drunk and violent, rife with crime. (6) According to the National Archives and Record Administration, “Temperance societies and Progressives alike saw the need for more governmental control and involvement in citizens' lives.” (7) By banning and making the production and consumption of alcohol illegal across the United States, it was easier to reduce the money being spent and bring uniform moral reform across the country. The temperance movement was born out of fear and ignorance and was a valiant effort to staunch the criminal activity present in the US that was believed to be a result of alcohol consumption.

A group that lobbied the most for the prohibition of alcohol was the Anti-Saloon League, a group whose mission was to prohibit the use of alcohol for the betterment of society. The most support and membership of the League came from Protestant evangelical churches. The League worked and lobbied all levels of government to get the legislature to ban alcohol. Once the eighteenth amendment was passed and ratified, the League fought for strict enforcement of the laws. There

was not much else for them to do, especially after the amendment was repealed in 1933. Although the group did not die out entirely, they merged with other groups and formed the National Temperance League in 1950. (8)

Following the adoption of the 18th amendment, the Volstead act was enacted as a way to enforce the amendment. The Act was named after the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Andrew Volstead. (9) The Volstead Act, otherwise known as the National Prohibition Act, did not deter businesses affected by the Act. Those enacting the law thought that money previously spent on drinking and gambling would be instead used for the benefit of their families, as well as supporting the nearby Broadway theaters and amusement parks. Despite the outlawing of liquor in the United States and attempts abroad to keep rum runners out of US territories, Bill McCoy stated, “... every human being is out to gyp the government.” In other words, despite many initially being against liquor, others were not inclined to obey the law when presented with the opportunity not to. (10)

Smugglers saw a large financial opportunity with the enactment of both Prohibition and the Volstead Act. As the limited supply of liquor that remained available dwindled in the United States, many people jumped at the opportunity to get in on the ground floor and make a large profit by selling illegal liquor. Although some businesses were getting rid of the

6. J. Anne Funderburg, *Bootleggers and Beer Barons of the Prohibition Era*, (McFarland & Company, Inc: North Carolina, 2014).

7. “The Volstead Act.” National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/volstead-act>.

8. “Anti-Saloon League.” Encyclopædia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anti-Saloon-League>.

9. “Prohibition.” Encyclopædia Britannica, May 7, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Prohibition-United-States-history-1920-1933>.

10. Frederic Van de Water, *The Real McCoy*, (Flat Hammock Press: Connecticut, 2007).

alcohol left in their stores, others were shipping their supplies overseas for safekeeping, until they could smuggle it back in following the act's implementation in January of 1920. Small-time smugglers began the practice of rum-running in small boats on the Atlantic, but mobsters quickly got wind of the amount of money that could be made and got involved in the rum-running syndicate. Some rum runners felt that they were above the bootleggers because it was more difficult to outrun the coast guard and other dangers on the ocean, rather than running on land. Funderburg has argued that “Rummers felt superior to bootleggers because smuggling on the high seas required more skill and nerve than bootlegging.” (11) Rum runners considered themselves at higher risk than the bootleggers because they were stuck in the ocean and generally could not outrun the coast guard ships, where bootleggers could get away on foot, should they get caught. Though this was not always the case, depending on the location.. Some smaller boats could escape the Coast Guard more easily, as they were quicker than larger ships and easier to maneuver.

The larger cargo ships that brought liquor overseas were called rum schooners and were often dark in color, without any lights to avoid detection. Smaller ships picked up the cargo from the larger vessel and brought the liquor to shore for distribution. (12) Ships utilized for rum running often sat directly off the

shore of the East Coast, outside of U.S. territory, in international waters. Rum-running and bootlegging became considered a lucrative career and became attractive to those who already operated outside of the law. Those who were involved in such operations did not believe themselves criminals, however, for operating outside of the law. Many believed that they had just found an excellent opportunity to make quick money; “Prohibition did not create criminals. It produced the opportunity of a lifetime.” (13) For most, it was a thrilling adventure, especially for the younger generation, who was getting involved around the ages of 17-20, and a way to make a lot of money. Another reason that men joined was due to a lack of job opportunities, the men who joined were often immigrants and knew that it would be more difficult for them to find work elsewhere, particularly Italian or Jewish immigrants and their families. (14)

New Jersey and New York became known as “Rum Row,” for the amount of liquor that was being transported to the shore, as well as the bootlegging on land. The *Marshall*, the ship captained by infamous rum runner Bill McCoy, was the first to land in the area with illegal liquor from the Bahamas. (15) Often called “the wettest state in the nation,” New Jersey was a prime location for bootlegging and rum running, in addition to illegal gambling and other activities. The establishment of the main four North Jersey shore towns, Long

11. J. Anne Funderburg, *Bootleggers and Beer Barons of the Prohibition Era*, (McFarland & Company, Inc: North Carolina, 2014).

12. *Ibid.*

13. Matthew R. Linderoth, *Prohibition on the North Jersey Shore: Gangsters on Vacation*, (Arcadia Publishing: South Carolina, 2010).

14. *Ibid.*

15. Frederic Van de Water, *The Real McCoy*, (Flat Hammock Press: Connecticut, 2007).

Branch, Asbury Park, Atlantic Highlands and Ocean Grove, resulted from the middle and upper classes from New York City trying to escape the crime and vice that had “polluted” their city. Specifically, Atlantic Highlands and Ocean Grove were founded as Methodist towns, a relaxing and religious retreat where they could escape New York City while remaining joyful and pious. Long Branch attracted the wealthier New Yorkers who were interested in the Monmouth Racetrack. Asbury Park was a family-friendly town that was filled with attractions for younger children, especially with the boardwalk. (16) Vice essentially followed them to the small towns during the prohibition era. Many blamed immigration, particularly Italian immigration, for the violence and gang activity that had risen in NYC. (17) However, despite their efforts, there was no escaping what would continue for years throughout the United States.

By the summer of 1920, New Jersey had not ratified the eighteenth amendment, and Governor Edwards made it clear he was not interested in helping the federal government, especially in enforcing prohibition. (18) The high-class, religious areas of the North Jersey shore were slowly giving way to the underworld tendencies, for example, “In the first year of Prohibition on the North Jersey Shore, liquor remained readily available. Even in places where it had always been forbidden, one could easily find hard alcohol.” (19) The years following prohibition only saw

an increase in alcohol. By 1923, the remaining liquor that had been made in the U.S. before prohibition was starting to dwindle. This was when Arnold Rothstein, famed gambler and alleged fixer of the 1919 World Series, got involved in the bootlegging business in New York and New Jersey, leading two young groups of men into the illegal alcohol trade. Meyer Lansky, Charles “Lucky” Luciano, and Ben “Bugsy” Siegel became underlings for Rothstein, working with a distributor he had out of Great Britain. (21)

Over time, the men split off into a few different gangs and remained in New York, and always allies. On the Jersey side, Alexander Lillien Jr., Joseph Reinfeld, and Samuel Cohen were on the rise. Both Lillien and Reinfeld had been involved in the business previously but started rising through the ranks while working together. In *Prohibition on the North Jersey Shore: Gangsters on Vacation*, author Matthew Linderoth stated:

The situation was shocking, but rumrunning brought money into the town—a lot of money. A person with a boat could make five dollars for each trip made to and from Rum Row. On shore, each person waiting to unload the boat made one dollar and again another dollar to load the truck. From the restaurants to the boatyards and garages, Prohibition was a boon for the Highlands. (22)

While many were thrilled about the availability of hard alcohol and beer, many in the North Jersey shore region loathed the fact that rum

16. Matthew R. Linderoth, *Prohibition on the North Jersey Shore: Gangsters on Vacation*, (Arcadia Publishing: South Carolina, 2010).

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

running was present in their god-fearing communities, corrupting their towns and families. Despite the amount of money brought into the towns as a result, it didn't matter, they were concerned about morality. But corrupt prohibition agents were removed from positions of power, and new prohibition agents were taking over. Those genuinely enforcing the laws governing prohibition needed a new tactic, because so many could be bought out. Their new mission was to target specific operations by many of those whose names we know today, such as Nucky Johnson or Al Capone. Furthermore, "The bureau also had a new mission. No longer would it bother going after restaurants, hotels and road stands; now it would primarily go after large-scale smuggling operations." (23) Additionally, new incentives were offered to anyone who knew anything about local bootlegging operations by customs agents after the Bureau's rehabilitation. It worked, tips came in rather quickly regarding local operations in the Asbury Park area.

As of 1928, Americans did not care whether or not there were crackdowns by prohibition agents and had learned to live with the conditions that were created as a result of prohibition. This meant accepting the fact that now average people were making their own alcohol, particularly in North Jersey. Linderoth described that "The people of the North Jersey Shore began brewing or distilling their own alcohol. The problem of the youth running amok, immigrants vacationing on the North Jersey Shore and women acting in a sexual manner no longer mattered, as almost

overnight vineyards sprang up all over the North Jersey Shore and superseded 'all other crops on many farms.'" (24) Alcohol-producing crops, specifically grapes for wine, were being grown in places where other fruits and vegetables were ordinarily grown. Recipes for how to ferment grapes into alcohol were being published in local newspapers. As time went on, enforcing prohibition became less appealing.

Atlantic City during the Prohibition era, made famous by the HBO show *Boardwalk Empire*, was famous for many things, but most notoriously the reign of "The Commodore" Louis Kuehnle and his successor, Enoch Thompson. During their time in power, it was as if prohibition did not exist in Atlantic City. Jonathan Pitney, the man responsible for the establishment of Atlantic City, known for a period as Absecon Island, doubtfully knew what his resort town would turn into during the prohibition era. Pitney wanted to establish a place for Philadelphia blue-collar workers to go and spend the money that they worked the entire week for, and thus Atlantic City was born. Another man, Samuel Richards, heard about Pitney's idea for a new resort town and jumped on board. Together, the men worked to get a railroad chartered from Camden, New Jersey to Absecon Island. At first, due to the uncomfortable train conditions, it was not popular for long commutes from the city to the shore. But over time, conditions improved and tens of thousands were making their way to the new resort. (25) Seeing the massive success, Samuel Richards endeavored to build another road,

23. Matthew R. Linderoth, *Prohibition on the North Jersey Shore: Gangsters on Vacation*, (Arcadia Publishing: South Carolina, 2010).

24. *Ibid.*

25. Richard Cowen, "An Old Jersey Shore Murder Mystery. inside the Secret Prohibition-Era History." *NJ.com*, Nov. 19 2023.

this time directly from Philadelphia to Absecon Island. From the book that inspired the hit show, “Despite its short life, the impact of the Philadelphia - Atlantic City railway was enormous. It spurred developments in a new part of the island and brought in hundreds of thousands of first-time visitors. Richards had unleashed Atlantic City’s potential as a resort for the masses.” (26) Meanwhile, as Atlantic City gained popularity and illegal activities such as gambling and drinking ramped up, the resort became known for such illegal activities.

The Commodore, aka Louis Kuehnle, ran Atlantic City and its illegal gambling and brothels prior to Enoch Johnson known as Nucky, when he was sent to prison, Nucky took over. Elected sheriff at the age of 25, the youngest in the state, his family had been involved politically in the facets of AC, which helped propel Nucky under the wing of Louis Kuehenle, otherwise known as the Commodore. Nucky, the leader of Atlantic City for several decades, protected that entertainment. (27) He took and gave bribes, greased the hands of people in government, and law enforcement officers looked the other way because that was how Atlantic City stayed alive. Nucky became known, through running the Atlantic City underground, as a high-profile person in the wider world of organized crime in the United States. In May of 1929, Atlantic City hosted a “conference” with some of the most high-profile mobsters in the U.S., including Lucky Luciano, Al Capone, and others.(28)

Nucky’s reign came to an end when he was arrested on tax charges, after the election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson to Governor of New Jersey.

Another resort town on the Jersey Shore had long dominated the area in popularity for people coming from the North, South, and West. Johnson stated that “Cape May had evolved from a sportsman’s fishing village where the upper class went to “rough it.” (29) Initially known as Cape Island, it was a getaway beach town that became known as America’s first shore town. At first, the only way to access the island was by ferry or boat, but after the Civil War, railroad travel became the primary mode of transportation. This led to the other barrier islands above Cape May slowly becoming industrialized, turning into more seasonal seaside resorts.

Five Mile Beach, known later as Wildwood, was one of the new seaside resort additions to Cape May. The same people who developed Wildwood Crest also created Holly Beach, which was a small resort, in 1885. The two grew into one shore area called Wildwood by 1912. As the town was established and grew slowly, the government decided to ban liquor near the boardwalk; liquor could not be within 200 feet according to the new regulations. It did not take long for those in the Wildwoods to come up with a solution to continue serving and producing alcohol. It was made clear that nothing was going to stop tourists and visitors to the Jersey Shore from drinking as “...Visitors to the Wildwoods were decidedly wet,

26. Nelson Johnson, *Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times, and Corruption of Atlantic City*, (Plexus Publishing: New Jersey, 2010)

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

because a speakeasy immediately opened in violation of that law, operating at a bathhouse near that boardwalk. Tourists were determined to have their drink, and local entrepreneurs were determined to provide it.” (30) Much to the dismay of the officials of Wildwood who were more interested in the profitability of Wildwood than temperance and status as a dry island. Those living on the island knew when people were fishing or rum-running. (31) In addition to North Jersey and the Jersey Shore, Cumberland County was also a popular spot for bootlegging and rum running.

Rum runners and bootleggers also took advantage of the shoreline of Cumberland County towns. Fortescue was first a fishing hub for fishermen, both to feed their families and sell their fresh catches at local markets. Fortescue gained popularity slowly over the years, as more people ventured into the area and built hotels and the boardwalk area. Cumberland County author George Carlisle stated in *Whiskey, Sun & Fish: The Early Years of Fortescue, A Fishing Village on the Delaware Bay*, “As the facilities at Fortescue were enlarged to accommodate more people, the island gained a reputation for being the finest resort on the bayshore. In 1924, Herbert Garrison’s new building on the boardwalk and over the beach contained a dance hall on the second floor.” (32) Orchestras were playing, and dining rooms and other hotels were being established along the boardwalk, which continued to

bring guests into Fortescue.

Rum runners were sometimes even referred to as “River Pirates.” (33) During prohibition, one could sit on the boardwalk in Fortescue and watch the signals of rum-running vessels blink at one another. Rum transportation was generally done under the cover of night, to hide their illegal activities and make it more difficult for pursuers to capture them; federal agents, coast guard, and other rum runners were often the pursuers they were wary of. There was no denying what was happening, and the complicity of locals, whose palms were being greased by the runners for their silence, or participation. Carlisle also posited, “Many of the fishermen and captains at Fortescue could not resist the temptation. And although there were some people on the island whose silence had to be bought, Fortescue was a significant port and center for the trade, especially during winter when the island was practically deserted.” (34) It was a significant way to make a profit during the quiet winter months, when no other money was coming in and hotel guests were not nearly as frequent as they were in the summer, particularly in places, where law enforcement either looked the other way, or were bribed.

The rum trade was so prolific in the Cumberland County area that on top of the Cumberland Hotel in Bridgeton, NJ, was a light that flashed to signal safety to rum runners along the coast. The light flashing indicated to rum runners that they could

30. Raymond Rebbman, *Prohibition in Cape May: Wetter than the Atlantic*, (The History Press: United Kingdom, August, 2019).

31. *Ibid.*

32. George Carlisle, *Whiskey, Sun & Fish: The Early Years of Fortescue, A Fishing Village on the Delaware Bay* (Exit Zero Press: NJ, 2014).

33. *Bridgeton Evening News*, Monday, Sep 08, 1930, Bridgeton NJ

34. George Carlisle, *Whiskey, Sun & Fish: The Early Years of Fortescue, A Fishing Village on the Delaware Bay* (Exit Zero Press: NJ, 2014).

bring in their wares. Allegedly, the Cumberland Hotel was the base for Chick Callahan's operations in Cumberland County. Chick (also known as Chich) Callahan of North Jersey fame was a frequent flier in Fortescue during prohibition. He, as a famed rum runner, brought illegal whiskey into Fortescue during the 1920s. He was very wealthy and generous with money until two convictions cost him the majority of his fortune. (35)

There were times, especially off the coast of Fortescue that, to outrun coast guard ships and others who tried to stop the rum runners, the runners aboard had to make a choice; it was either them or their cargo. They would throw the rum and liquor overboard and for a long time, it remained in the marshes. (36) For decades many in Cumberland County have found bottles among the marshes leftover from prohibition. Callahan was known for "holding court" at the Cumberland Hotel. Callahan was also found to be part of a rum ring operation, alongside his lieutenants Cyril Eppinger and "Doc" Dolan in Cumberland County, alongside several other Greenwich farmers who were charged with breaking prohibition laws by transporting liquor, storing liquor in their barns, and other similar crimes. (37) Many law enforcement officers, specifically around the Bridgeton area, looked the other way on local bootlegging and rum-running operations, those who were caught were

usually fined for their crimes, but some were put in jail for 30-60 days if they were repeat offenders. There were several instances where those in Bridgeton and Millville specifically were caught brewing and selling, as well as operating speakeasies. These sources were published frequently in the Bridgeton Evening News.

Prohibition in Bridgeton was tolerated but breaking the law was considered only an adventure, not a crime. Materials were sold for home brew, as beer was known in the dry days, including bottles, bottle caps, crocks, yeast and malt. Grain alcohol for mixing gin and moonshine sold for \$5 a gallon. Gin was manufactured by diluting the alcohol with distilled water and oil of juniper. (38)

With the ability to make homebrews, speakeasies started popping up around the Cumberland County area, in towns such as Greenwich, Bridgeton, Fortescue, and Millville, just to name a few. In a trial from May of 1930, a man named Robert S. Schopps of Bridgeton was convicted for selling the homebrewed beer that many others had also been selling. When he was asked if he knew that it was illegal to sell, Robert replied, "Not home brew. Nearly everybody in Bridgeton has home brew." (39) With hardware and grocery stores selling the supplies necessary to make homebrew, many either did not know or blatantly ignored the fact that the drink was illegal. One woman, whose husband

35. George Carlisle, *Whiskey, Sun & Fish: The Early Years of Fortescue, A Fishing Village on the Delaware Bay* (Exit Zero Press: NJ, 2014).

36. *The New York Times*, "Hunt Rum-Runners in Jersey Marshes: State Troopers Hem in Crews of Two Boats after \$50,000 Liquor Cargo is Seized. Trucks Ready for Loading Coast Guard at Great Egg Harbor Gets Another \$25,000 Shipment of "Delayed Holiday Goods."." *New York Times* (1923-), January 13, 1932.

37. *Bridgeton Evening News*, Friday, Apr 13, 1962, Bridgeton, NJ

38. *Bridgeton Evening News* Friday, Feb 23, 1979, Bridgeton, NJ

39. *Bridgeton Evening News*, Friday, May 02, 1930, Bridgeton, NJ

spent much of his time and money at a speakeasy on Depot Street in Bridgeton, ratted out the speakeasy to Lieutenant Richard Haines, who shut it down. No one who was caught in the speakeasy tried to run, as there was nowhere to go. The owner, Walter Shaw of Bridgeton, said that he could not get work otherwise and figured selling homebrew on the side was a way to make a living (40). People throughout the United States, especially on the East Coast, clearly ignored prohibition laws in favor of fun, making a living, and otherwise choosing to not believe in something they deemed unfair. The history of prohibition in the US is very interesting, especially when you look at the entire state of New Jersey. Despite there being three specific regions where prohibition and crime were at their peak, in places like Cumberland County citizens were involved in bootlegging and rum running.

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Michael Pennell's Roadside Stand on Buckshutem Road

By Joseph Mathews

I live in Leesburg and drive the entire length of Buckshutem Road when I go to work in Greenwich. I make this drive several times a week. In summer I would

pass three produce vendors. One was a fairly elderly man who sold produce out of the back of his pick-up. Often when I pulled up to buy something, I would see him slowly get out of his cab to wait on me. I admired his tenacity and entrepreneurial spirit. His truck was full of product, especially of ears of corn, and it all looked good: a kind of cornucopia. He parked on the southeast corner of the intersection of Buckshutem and Mauricetown Crossway Roads. He was there for just one season if memory serves me right, in 2022, I think. It occurred to me that I might write an article about these stands since they seemed to be disappearing.

I recall Camp's farm stand on Delsea Drive in Port Elizabeth--it closed a few years ago. It had been a very attractive and relatively large stand for years, employing young people to serve customers from the shore traffic in summer. Lillian's is a family-owned truck farm across the street from Leesburg Prison on Delsea Drive. I was surprised to learn they've been in business for over one hundred years. They're still active, having built an impressive permanent structure for their produce business just north of Delsea Drive's intersection with Rt. 347, thus accessing the shore traffic. Perhaps later I'll be able to write about Camp's and Lillian's, and maybe Frank Poloff's who until a year ago had an attractive stand on Buckshutem Road in Fairfield Township.

Leaving Mauricetown, not far down Buckshutem Road toward Bridgeton, is the home of Michael Pennell, owner of the first of two more permanent-looking

produce stands that I used to patronize. I managed to connect with Michael this past winter even though he has mostly closed down shop. In fact I'm sorry to report that all of the produce stands on Buckshutem Road are now closed. For now, I feel fortunate to be able to interview Michael Pennell. This past winter, with some light snow on the ground, I stopped at his place, walked around to the back door, and knocked. He opened up right away and invited me in. He was very friendly--a quite willing interviewee. When I ask him about his family, he speaks readily and lets the memories flow. He's always had the gift of gab, he says. He tells me his uncle Henry Reeves used to live in the house and ran the veggie stand. Michael used to help his uncle on the farm and then took over in 1998. Uncle Henry was born in 1912. I did not insist on a straight chronology--Mike says things as they occur to him. I hear him say "Ackley Road," pronouncing it like "ache." As far as I know, it should rhyme with "hack," but Ache-ly is how he says it. Michael didn't farm all his life, in fact, he worked for W.T. Welding Company in Mt. Laurel from 1972 to 1976. Then he came back down to live in Buckshutem and worked for Whitehead Sand from 1977 to 1979.

But he digresses a bit to talk about Ackley Road where his family once owned some acreage. If you drive west on Ackley Road, you will be in the Millville Wildlife Management Area. This was where Baileytown used to be before the community was forced out in 1942 so that the town could become an aerial target range for the Army Air Field in Millville. There was a basket factory in Baileytown, Bailey's, owned by South Jersey Package

Company, headquartered in Bridgeton.

Michael's ancestors came in 1803 to Buckshutem from Port Elizabeth. Some of his family are buried in the Friends cemetery in Port Elizabeth. I asked if his people were Quakers and he says yes. His mother's family were the Reeves. He had 3 brothers and 2 sisters. He was born in 1952. The stand was built in 1944--possibly by Joe Hiles, a handyman who used to work for Michael's uncle. Michael's grandparents started with this farm in 1901 with his grandmother Elizabeth Reeves (born 1883) eventually selling produce--so this farm is over 100 years old as well! Her maiden name was Pettit, she married in 1901, and she died in 1967. That's when Michael's Uncle Henry (born 1912) took over. In 1990 the Millville journalist Jean Jones wrote a brief and charming profile of Henry Reeves who she felt was a one-of-a-kind storyteller and the area's unofficial historian. Loquacious Michael was carrying on the tradition.

Michael's grandparents (the Reeves) bought the land--over 100 acres--in 1901, though it had already been in the family as early as 1803. Drainage ditches were dug in 1816, leading Michael to assume the land was marshy. The farm was on both sides of Buckshutem Road. Michael has sold off large parts of the land to a nurseryman.

So that's the Reeves: where did the Pennells come from? Michael says they owned coal mines and barges in Scranton.

The front of the house was built in 1860 by Great Great Uncle Oliver Reeves who fought in the Civil War and had a glass eye. Oliver's brother Henry was born in 1840 and died in the war in 1863. The back part was built in 1909. Indoor plumbing

was installed in 1942. There is a root cellar in the front of the house where potatoes were stored. Michael's mother used to sit in a wooden tub and paddle across the shallow water on the floor to fetch them. Later Michael showed me the basement which indeed had a few inches of water because of the high-water table (the basement windows are kept open to avoid mildew). When Uncle Henry was a boy and complained about being bored, his mother told him to go down and pick the "eyes" or sprouts off the potatoes. Generally speaking, life was simpler with few distractions in the house. When there were cows and chickens, the work routine took precedence. There was meat, eggs, milk, honey, and berries. There was a grape arbor. The stand was built under "the old apple tree."

Mike stopped running the stand in 2019 during the time of Covid. He used to buy some produce wholesale and it just got too expensive. However, I was pleasantly surprised this past June when he had delicious strawberries for sale, a cultivar developed by Rutgers.

When I was a customer, I would stop at the stand and Michael would come out of the front door to wait on me. He had groupings of veggies carefully placed on the counter and I would choose what I wanted, pay for it, and often we would chat a bit. I once told him I was looking for Atlantic White Cedar timbers for our dendrochronology project. He said there was a something like a bulkhead built with large timbers out in the wetlands, along the Maurice River. I think he said he went looking for them for me, but could not find them.

Michael's hands tremble, a condition resembling Parkinson's disease. He has

always had this condition, even as a child, he says. He was told he should not drive, but he did a lot of driving for the welding company in Mt. Laurel.

He has worked hard all of his life. He grew some of the produce for his stand and bought the rest, displaying it attractively. I seem to recall he had grades of tomatoes to choose from. I saved money by buying his "B" tomatoes. I assume that over the years he often took time to chat with his customers as his Uncle Henry had done. I feel grateful for places like his where you stop to examine produce that speaks to you in some way and where conversations pop up at no cost other than your time. My father was a furniture salesman who also possessed the gift of gab, a talent I admire.

So like Jean Jones I sing the praises of the Jersey roadside stand and I'm glad to have made a friend of Michael Pennell. He allowed me to make copies of photos of his relatives. They can be viewed at Lummis Library.



Joseph Mathews has been working at Lummis Library for years. He has a BA (La Salle College) and MA (U. of Toledo, Ohio) in English and an "ABD" (all but dissertation) in English and History (Temple U.). He's currently Governor of The Swedish Colonial Society.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Historical Society



WORD SEARCH

M	C	H	K	W	U	A	L	C	O	H	O	L	D	J	H	Y	L	M	W
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ALCOHOL
 ALLIED FORCES
 AMENDMENT
 ARMY
 BOAT

BOOZE
 EIGHTEENTH
 MEMO
 MILITARY
 PROHIBITION

SERVICE
 TEMPERANCE
 TWENTY FIRST
 VETERAN
 WORLD WARS

Coloring Page



CUMBERLAND COUNTY
Historical Society





Tea Burning Anniversary

PHOTO BY MARTIN R. SMITH

**October 5th, 2024
10am – 5pm**



ALL Cumberland County Historical
Society Museums will be OPEN

Come see living historians and demonstrations to
commemorate the 250th anniversary of the
Greenwich Tea Burning at The Gibbon House (1730),
960 Ye Greate Street, Greenwich, NJ 08323.



2pm— Tea Burning Discussion with
Dr. John Fea; Lummis Library

3pm— Tea Burning Demonstration, Gibbon House

FREE OF CHARGE! No tickets necessary.