

# THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

## Lance Ashworth to be Keynote Speaker

The Hunterdon County Historical Society's Cemetery Committee, in partnership with Hunterdon County's Tri-centennial Committee and the **Mount Amwell Project**, is presenting the third annual cemetery seminar on September 24<sup>th</sup>.



Lance Ashworth, President of the Friends of Fishkill Supply Depot (FOFSD) is to be our keynote speaker. Under Lance's direction, the FOFSD has met with significant milestones: achieving federal 501[c](3) not-for-profit status; creating and overseeing (in partnership with Fishkill Historical Society) an annual Revolutionary War Weekend encampment; expanding strategic relationships at the local, state, and federal levels; and, developing an organizational roadmap to lead FOFSD.

In 2007, archaeologists confirmed what local historians and others could not: the existence of a Continental Army burial ground where at least 300 soldiers lie forgotten in unmarked graves upon land once known as the Fishkill Supply Depot. Up until then, the burial ground was considered folklore, something of local legend, no solid proof had ever been discovered. Unfortunately, this single parcel of undisturbed land was found to be privately-owned and slated for commercial development. At risk was not only the soldiers' cemetery (the largest burial ground of the Revolutionary War) but other identified ruins.

For this reason, the not-for-profit organization "Friends of the Fishkill Supply Depot" was formed to advocate for the preservation, study and proper interpretation of this sacred site. Since 2007, members of the FOFSD have spoken before the U.S. Congress, rallied behind legislation to amend the Battlefield Protection Act to include the

Revolutionary War and War of 1812 and have sponsored various outreach events such as the annual Revolutionary War Weekend and the national Wreaths Across America honoring our fallen heroes.

President Lance Ashworth is an Ohio native who has adopted Fishkill, New York as his home. He is a Graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and served in the active U.S. Army where he achieved the rank of Captain. After joining FOFSD as a volunteer in August 2009, he was voted President in January 2010, a position he has held ever since.

The Seminar will also include morning lectures on the fate of some graveyards of Hunterdon's original national heroes, our Revolutionary War Soldiers, followed by an afternoon workshop brainstorming ideas for legal protection of these historic properties. Other lectures will include examples of unattended and/or forgotten County Revolutionary War Veteran burial grounds, an attorney Q&A on NJ law, and a presentation of what other states are doing to protect historic cemeteries.

The seminar/workshop will be held at the Hunterdon County Library - Main Branch on Route 12 on Saturday Sept 24. It will run from 9AM until 4PM with lunch provided. Registration fee: \$10. Space is limited to the first 75 paid registrants.

Mail Checks to: HCHS Cemetery Committee, 114  
Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822  
Contact info: [info@hunterdonhistory.org](mailto:info@hunterdonhistory.org)  
908-782-1091



## Why We Do What We Do

*The following essay was written by a fourth grader from Whitehouse, New Jersey as an entry in the Hunterdon County Cultural and Heritage Commission annual "The Most Historic Place In My Town Composition Contest." It won 1st Place in Readington Township's School District and 2nd place overall in Hunterdon County. Kiera's words poignantly remind us of "Why We Do What We Do." - ed.*

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### Haypress Cemetery - A Walk Back In Time

by Kiera Spring

If you follow the little road that runs alongside the train tracks and past the Readington Library in Whitehouse Station you will see the Haypress Cemetery. It's located at 13 High Street in Whitehouse Station. If you look to your left there is a stonewall and one rusted metal gate that has a sign on it that says "HAYPRESS CEMETERY." In the past the cemetery had been called the Old Log Church Cemetery and the Whitehouse Old Burying Grounds.

Last year I wrote about the Van Horne house where the ruins are in my development of Lake Cushetunk. While I was doing research I found out that Cornelius Van Horne has a gravestone in the Haypress Cemetery that says "In Memory of Capt. Cornelius Vanhorne died Feb 12 1744 in y 49 year of his age."

Cornelius and his brother Abraham moved to Readington Township in 1722. Abraham built a gristmill and a sawmill. A gristmill is a place where you can grind grain. And a sawmill is where logs are cut into boards. Cornelius Van Horne held the commission of captain from King George II of England. He was very proud of this title and wanted to be addressed as Captain Van Horne. In 1728 Cornelius was appointed to try pirates. I wanted to see where he was buried so I went to take a look with my mom.

The cemetery got its name because the town of Whitehouse had a hay press which was a very useful invention back then. A hay press is something that people used to compress hay. Some people had them built into their barns.



I read on FindAGrave.com that the stonewall around the cemetery is very special. The stones are said to be from the White House Tavern which was owned by Abraham Van Horne Sr. Whitehouse Tavern got its name because the walls were painted white and there is an account from someone who stayed there the same night that George Washington spent a night. When the tavern fell down people thought that the cemetery needed a wall so they used the stones of the tavern to build a wall around the Haypress Cemetery. But I read on Wikipedia that the stones could also have been used at the Daughters of the American Revolution Cemetery that is on Route 22 in Whitehouse Station. This makes more sense because this cemetery is closer to where the tavern used to be. It's a bit of a way down the road to get to the Haypress Cemetery, but the stones walls surrounding both cemeteries look the same so it's possible they used the tavern's stones for both cemeteries.

One day my mom and I were going to take pictures of Haypress Cemetery when we saw a man raking up to leaves on the cemetery's floor. We wanted to know if he knew anything interesting about the cemetery. We introduced ourselves and he said, "My name's Garrit. That's Garrit with an i not an e." So we asked him if he knew anything. He said that he knew tons of stuff about it like he almost knew the people there. He said that adults were buried on the outsides of the cemetery, and that all the children are buried in the inside. He gave us a tour of all the stones in the graveyard.

The first gravestone we saw was Captain Cornelius Vanhorne. His stone was gray and has engraved vines on the sides, an angel on top and the right side of the stone is broken away. He told us that Cornelius had ten children and he had three wives. His stone is one of the oldest ones you can read.

He told us that most of the families buried here were related in some way. He mentioned the Covenhovens, the Wyckoffs the Strykers and the Vorhees. Most of the families were buried there because they were members of the Reformed Dutch Church. This church group first met in 1792 in the barn of Abraham Van horn, Cornelius' brother. Then in 1807 a church was built next to Abraham's house.

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Garrit pointed out the Stryker family gravestones. I sadly noticed that Eleanor Cornell Stryker's gravestone showed that she only lived to be 18 months old. When I asked Garrit about this, he said that back then many children and women died young because of childbirth or diseases like small pox, croup, and fevers and diarrhea. He also said that there were not many doctors to help with sicknesses. Children under 7 years old and adults over 65 were the most likely to die during this time period. He told the sad story of the Vorhees family, Lukas and Anna who had two daughters, Charity and Elizabeth. Elizabeth died when she was only 7 days old and Charity when she was two. I noticed that the Stillwells had a son who only lived to be only two years old and the York family had a daughter, Rebeckah, who only lived to six weeks. Her gravestone had a sad inscription that said "Sleep on my lovely child Enjoy thy reft fo fweet I hope my deareft babe With thee again to meet."

As we walked around we came across a stone with Garrit Eick inscribed on it who died when he was 24 years old. "Look, he spells his name the same way you do," I said as I turned to share this with Garrit who had been giving us a tour of the cemetery. But as I looked around he was nowhere to be found. I got goose bumps on the back of my neck when I thought could this have been the same Garrit?

After one more look around the cemetery we hurried home and looked up Garrit Eick. He was the son of Magdalena and Philip. Magdalena died 3 years before her son, and her gravestone is near his in Haypress Cemetery. But Garrit's father, Phillip, lived to be 88! Besides Garrit, Philip and Magdalena had 3 other children, but I did not see any more graves for the Eick family. I wondered what had killed Garrit when he was 24 years old.

There wasn't much information on the Haypress Cemetery and the families that rest there. I found you could spend hours researching and sometimes I'd come across some great information and other times I was surprised that I couldn't find anything on the families. I did discover that Mr. David Reading, a descendant of John Reading who was Governor of New Jersey in the 1700's, is currently the founder of the Mount Amwell Project. He is leading the Haypress Cemetery Project in hopes of restoring and maintaining the Haypress Cemetery. My family and I have offered our help to Mr. Reading clean up the cemetery. I can't wait to begin helping with the project.

I first choose to research the Haypress Cemetery because of the connection to Corenlius Van Horne, but the more I took pictures of the graves and looked up the family names on the Internet and in books I began to see how the town of Whitehouse Station that I live in began more than 300 years ago. I discovered that the families of those buried in the Haypress Cemetery came together because of their religion and practiced first in the barn of Abraham Van Horne and then later built a church to worship in. I found original documents on ancestry.com that dated back to the late 1700's, written in hand that showed all of the families that joined the Reformed Dutch Church. The cemetery told me of the names of some of the first families to move to Whitehouse and help establish it. They were millers, shop owners, blacksmiths, farmers, a tavern owner, and served in the Revolutionary War. I believe that the Haypress Cemetery is the most historical place in my town because it's gravestones have helped me see how my town was started and I look forward to helping preserve the cemetery so that it may continue to tell its stories.

### Research

- Information on Whitehouse and the Van Horne Family <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=kings-highway&id=181737>
- Ancestry.com
- The Van Horne Genealogy
- Phone conversation with David Reading, director of the Mount Amwell Project
- FindAGrave.com
- What is a Haypress [www.farmcollector.com/implements/haypress](http://www.farmcollector.com/implements/haypress)
- Tombstone Inscriptions Readington Township Hunterdon County
- Readington Township History <http://www.readingtontwp.org/historyreadington.html>
- Death and Dying <http://goodspeedhistories.com/death-and-dying-in-1850-hunterdon-county>
- John reading's Diary
- Images of America Readington Township
- History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey
- Wikipedia Whitehouse Station

Cemetery News

Haypress

The initial cleanup of the Haypress cemetery in Whitehouse Station was held on May 14<sup>th</sup>. Several trees were removed and a significant portion of the ground brush was cleared. The hard working volunteers were John O'Brien, Chris Olewnik, Ann Rotunno, Patti Christie, Christina and Kiera Spring, and Dave Reading.



Chris Olewick tops out a tree prior to removal.

Howell

At a meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Stockton Borough and the Mount Amwell Project reached an agreement in principle to move ahead with the acquisition of the Howell graveyard. The title search ordered by Stockton is complete and it verified that the property is abandoned. Stockton will acquire title under the state law allowing municipalities to take title to abandoned cemeteries (NJSA 40:60-25.61). The MTAP will reimburse Stockton for acquisition costs incurred and take ownership. The terms of the acquisition and transfer are to be documented in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Stockton and the MTAP. This is real progress towards preserving this important historic graveyard.

Vertical File

The Hunterdon County Historical Society's Cemetery Committee is collecting and organizing information on Hunterdon's cemeteries for access by the public

at the HCHS library in Flemington. The MTAP has provided the file folders for the 160 cemeteries and nearly completed the collection process for the several northern municipalities. It is hoped that the file can be completed by the end of the year.

New Web Site Cemetery Data base

The MTAP web site (www.mtamwell.org) has been re-hosted to a new framework, Drupal 7.2. The cemetery database implemented on the old Cake based framework has been successfully ported to Drupal. The new site no longer requires member passwords, but users must register to make comments. Special thanks to John G. Reading, Broomfield, CO.

Thanks to Pat Barber for obtaining the cemetery burial records for the New Spruce Run Cemetery and we are especially grateful to Patti Christie for entering over 720 names into the new database. This is the first addition to the original list.

Announcements

Fall Meeting

The fall meeting will has not been scheduled yet. Announcements will mailed out by the end of September with date, place, and speaker.

Transcription Day

On June 15<sup>th</sup> we will gather at the New Germantown Cemetery in Oldwick to copy gravestone inscriptions. If you are interested in volunteering please call or email Dave Reading at 908-236-0276 (dave.reading@mtamwell.org).

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