

# THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

## Swackhammer Stabilized!

Churchyard cemetery saved from destruction



*The Swackhammer Church and Graveyard in October 2017*

In March 2013 several volunteers led by Jeff and the late Joan Chiu embarked on effort to clear and restore the grounds and cemetery of the long abandoned and overgrown site of the Mount Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, commonly called the "Swackhammer churchyard and cemetery." The church was founded in 1844 by Reverend Lambert Swackhammer and built by mason Jacob Swackhammer. Rev. Swackhammer left the church in 1850 and it was sold eventually to the Evangelical

Lutheran Church of New Jersey in 1868. It was used until 1896 after which it was abandoned. For a more complete history see: <http://www.thehistorygirl.com/2013/03/saving-grave-strangers-work-to-preserve.html>. This year Mount Amwell Project funds and volunteers have nearly completed the work started by Jeff and Joan Chiu. They had cleared brush and trees as well as found and reset many headstones. Especially

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impressive was the tree removal done by Jeff Chui and Chris Olewick.

There was a general cleanup in April of this year but by early June, the weeds had grown to several feet. A second cleanup was done and a neighbor was engaged to cut the grass every two weeks for the rest of the summer. It is anticipated this arrangement will continue in 2018.

In August this work was done to accommodate better and safer parking for visitors as well improve the site's appearance. LCW Contractors of Glen Gardner was employed to grade around the church ruins, remove stones fallen walls, and clear several tree stumps. Ron and Pat Barber, Dave Voorhees, and Jan and Dave Reading raked, seeded, and mulched the cleared area with new grass.

The Mount Amwell Project took possession of the site in 2015. The Lutheran Synod of New Jersey granted a quit claim deed to the MTAP. It was the culmination of the efforts of many people but primarily Joan Chiu, representing the Swackhammer group, and Tom Kull, Treasurer of the Synod. The Synod's governing board approved a resolution on 6 March 2014 to convey any interest in the Swackhammer property to the Mount Amwell Project. On June 17th 2014 the deed and associated paper work was hand delivered to the Hunterdon County Clerk's Office in Flemington for recording.



*Early work in progress*



*Initial condition in 2013*

Language from the deed "Property was at one time previously owned and utilized by a group practicing the Lutheran religion. Grantor is unaware the duration of time that this group operated at the Property, when such operations ceases, or how title ownership of the Property has derived to the present. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 16:5-26, all property owned by an incorporated Lutheran Church of New Jersey at the time such Church disbands, or ceases to function or conduct worship passes to and becomes vested in the synod with which the said Church is affiliated at the time of such default. The Grantor is one of sixty-five (65) synods in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and it is likely, though not subject to confirmation, that the Property would be within the territorial boundary of the Grantor through merger and succession. Accordingly, to the extent that the group practicing the Lutheran religion at the Property would have been deemed an incorporated Lutheran Church of New Jersey within the ambit of N.J.S.A. 16:5-26 such that title to the Property would have vested in the Grantor by operation of law, then Grantor is authorized to execute and deliver this Deed to the Grantee." See Mount Amwell News, Vol. 8, no. 1 (2014).



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*Church in 1927*

### Burials

Anna, Birth and death dates unknown.  
Edef Castner, 1849 - 1851  
Mahlon Castner, unknown - 17 Apr 1848  
Mary Adaline Castner, Jul 1845 - 27 Sep 1849  
Mary Ann Orts Castner, 27 Oct 1835 - 21 May 1911  
Moore Castner, 1802 - 1875  
Nathan Castner, Oct 1832 - 1915  
Sarah Ann Castner, 1 Sep 1847 - 26 Sep 1849  
Susan Force Castner, 1804 - 1887  
William S Hardy, 8 Jan 1850 - 30 Aug 1870  
Mary A. Hisenbough, Aug 1823 - 30 Mar 1851  
Benjamin Johnson, Birth and death dates unknown.  
James F. Johnson, 1861 - 4 Feb 1863  
Martha Johnson, unknown - 15 Oct 1864  
Mary Ann Vosseller Johnson, 25 May 1831 - 9 May 1867  
Amy Lance, 1851 - 6 Sep 1867  
Henry Lance, 15 Feb 1795 - 26 Jan 1876  
James W Lance, unknown - 2 Apr 1857  
John Lance, 1789 - 6 Jan 1865  
John H. Lance, 19 Apr 1823 - 7 Oct 1856  
Joseph F. Lance, 23 Oct 1818 - 2 May 1891  
Mary "Polly" Force Lance, 1 Aug 1801 - 17 Oct 1883  
Sarah Lance, 23 Nov 1815 - 15 Jul 1883  
Susan Force Lance, 1 Jun 1788 - 27 Jan 1861  
Susan A. Smith Lance, 22 Feb 1829 - 1 Jan 1855  
Charles Mayberry, 1781 - 1 Aug 1849  
Susan A Miller Mayberry, unknown - 17 Feb 1877  
Elizabeth Slater Osmun, 18 Mar 1816 - 7 Dec 1871

Holaways Osmun, unknown - 16 Apr 1859  
Lucretia Pickel Osmun, 8 Oct 1821 - 3 Jul 1885  
Peter Osmun, 6 Apr 1818 - 27 Apr 1883  
Ziba Osmun, unknown - 22 Jul 1887  
Clarissa "Clarissy" Sliker, Birth and death dates unknown.  
Sarah Sliker, 1842 - 1848  
Linette Thompson, unknown - 1848  
Jacob Vosseler, 24 Jun 1759 - 17 Jul 1840  
Margaret Ockerman Vosseler, 1785 - 9 Jun 1858  
Mahala Vosseller, 1821 - 13 Mar 1857  
Robert Thomson Vossler, 1809 - 1883  
James Vusler, Birth and death dates unknown.  
Joseph Vusler, May 1852 - 5 Jan 1855  
Matilda Vusler, unknown - 14 Apr 1854  
A W, Birth and death dates unknown.

See Sunday Democrat, "Transformed by Faith", 15 Dec 2013, page A-3, for an article on the volunteer's efforts.

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*Church in 1982*

News

Woodschurch Cemetery



Volunteers organized by Dennis Graney and supported by the MTAP performed a day long clean-up on November 18<sup>th</sup> at The Woodschurch cemetery in Readington Twp. The group learned to reset headstone bases and reset footstones. They cleaned leaves and other debris. Participants were Rachel C. Graney, Franklin, NJ; Dawn Ksheboon, Butler, NJ; Morgan Graney, Ocean Gate, NJ; Destan Altunbilek, Sussex, NJ; Lisa J. Johnson, Columbus, NJ; Matthew Graney, Ocean Gate, NJ; and Dennis Graney, Wantage, NJ. The group will return in the spring.



Executive Directors' Message

We had a great year! But...

The Swackhammer Cemetery was accepted as the first historic (non-active) member cemetery of the New Jersey Cemetery Association. Membership provides us with access to legislative advocates at the state level for monitoring cemetery legislation. Significant work was done in 2017 to clear and put maintenance procedures in place for the four cemeteries that we are currently responsible for: the Swackhammer as described in the current article, the Haypress, the Reading Burial Ground, and the Slacktown. We supported the legal efforts for Stockton Borough to obtain ownership of the Howell Graveyard. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in 2018 and the MTAP will have an additional cemetery to clear and maintain. However, we currently do not have the funds to cover our anticipated 2018 budget of \$6,000. **FUNDS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED.** Please review the included letter and make a tax deductible donation before the end of the year. GIVE TILL IT FEELS RIGHT.

David Reading, Executive Director

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Facebook

Visit our new Facebook page Facebook/mt-amwell-project. Jeff Williamson and Natalie Peluso are in the process of moving the Swackhammer FB content to the new site.