

# Friends Report

Annual newsletter of the Friends of the Locktown Stone Church, Inc.

December 2020

## In Search of Locktown Ancestor- Richard Heath

Contributor: Sherel Heath Hersch

Richard Heath served as a Private in the Hunterdon County militia under Captains Ely, Schenck, Stout, Phillips, Gearhart, and Hoppock. According to Richard's statement to obtain a Revolutionary War pension before the Court of Common Pleas in Hunterdon County on August 14, 1832, he "was enrolled in the militia in Captain George Ely's Company in Amwell; [he] first went out in 1775 when [he] was a little over 16 years of age." Richard recalled, "I was out on one tour under Captain Ely when Washington sent us to take all the flatt bottomed boats about Trenton and along the river (Delaware) and take them up to Easton to keep them out of the way of the British." His testimony continued, "From the time I first went out to Amboy which was in 1775 when the militia was first called, to the end of the War, I always went out whenever it came my turn, never missed a tour of duty as my father was a strong Whig and always insisted on my going but my memory has failed so much that it is impossible for me to state the number of tours I was out, to remember the officers I was with or all the places we were at...I am satisfied that I served considerably more than two years." Richard Heath was granted his annual \$80 military pension on August 21, 1833.

Richard married Catherine Rittenhouse (daughter of William Rittenhouse & Rebecca Harnet) circa 1782 and together they had 10 children: William, Andrew, Elizabeth, Jacob, Daniel, Peter, Anna, Benjamin, Rebecca, and George D. They were members of the Baptist Church in Kingwood. Richard moved to Kingwood Township circa 1787 where he owned a 105 acre farm. Catherine died January 10, 1830 and Richard died February 13, 1849. They are buried along with their son, George D., in the Locktown Baptist Church Cemetery.

I have been interested in family history since college when I took a seminar in Family & Ethnicity. As part of my research for that class, my father, Edward S. Heath, took me to Locktown to visit the family farm,



Locktown Baptist Cemetery and the Locktown Christian Church cemetery. I was given a pedigree chart commissioned in the Civil War era by my great great grandfather, Edward Mason Heath, and I thought I was "done" researching my family. Many years later, I decided to join the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) and through my research to "prove" my lineage, I became addicted to genealogy.



This summer, I brought my three children to Locktown to show them our heritage. After the visit I decided to honor Richard Heath's military service by applying for a Revolutionary War commemorative marker through the DAR. The DAR mandates several requirements before the application is approved including proof of the soldier's service, soldier's rank, unit, state and pension number, proof of the exact burial site, and express permission from the cemetery's owners. The last requirement was the most difficult. Guided by Marfy Goodspeed, I started with the NJ Baptists with no response. Then after several inquiries to cemetery historians, and Delaware and Kingwood Township clerks and tax officials, I was able to confirm that the Locktown Baptist Cemetery is actually located in both townships and the legal owner is indeed the American Baptist Churches of NJ. After several emails and calls, I was able to secure permission from the American Baptist Churches of NJ and my application was complete. It can be a 6 month wait for the application to be approved. I am hoping for approval and then a small ceremony for the occasion. I am very grateful to the many wonderful people from Hunterdon County who were willing to help me with this project!

*Sources:* Roxanne K Carkhuff, "Richard Heath," *Hunterdon Historical Newsletter*, Fall 1983, vol. 19, no. , pgs. 397, 400.

Marfy Goodspeed, "The Heaths of Locktown," *Goodspeed Histories*, September 20, 2020, <https://goodspeedhistories.com/the-heaths-of-locktown/>.

Louise H. Tunison and Althea F. Courtot, *The Heath Family of Hunterdon County, New Jersey*, 1977, Roselle, NJ.

Revolutionary War Pension Application File, S820, Richard Heath, National Archives, Washington, DC.

Will of Richard Heath, Will Book 8, page 421, Hunterdon County Surrogate's Office.

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***President's Letter 2020 – The Friends of the Locktown Stone Church, Inc.***

As you might expect, COVID-19 has changed everything for the Friends of the Locktown Stone Church. Due to health concerns, we've ceased meeting face to face. Due to monetary concerns we've been meeting using the free version of the Zoom program, so our meetings are currently limited to 40 minutes. Both of these conditions raise the level of difficulty in having a spontaneous exchange of ideas. The Zoom program has cut us off before we've completed our discussion, even though we've tried to be concise in our meeting.

Our core activities revolve around fine music in an intimate space. Intimate and social distancing are mutually exclusive, so as we try to come up with alternatives there are many stumbling blocks. Wil Wong hosted a lunch stop for his car club at the Church as an alternative event. Dan Wells, Director of the Delaware Valley Regional High School Choir has proposed an experiment. This Spring we may host a voice concert being held inside with doors and windows opened, while the audience is assembled outside in their own chairs. The Trustees are eager for continued use in any way possible and we hope this experiment will be successful.

Our efforts to gain approval for building a Carriage House with a rest room facility has also been negatively influenced by COVID-19. The NJDEP Wetlands review is still on-going, even though field visits have been completed and we were promised a resolution "within the week", about two months ago. Assuming we gain that approval we will move to the next stage of Township Permits and approvals.

We can only hope and pray that 2021 will be an improvement over the reality of 2020! We look forward to hosting our patrons in the Church to listen to music and visit afterwards.

*Mark Zdepski, President*

***Treasurer's Report***

Disappointment this year in not being able to bring you another Mimi Upmeyer Concert Series. At least we were able to hold a 200 year anniversary gala in December 2019. Thank you to those who supported us at the event with donations that totaled over \$700.

Friends of the Locktown Stone Church depend on the generosity of our donors. In the last 12 months you have responded with individual contributions of \$4,991. We also benefit from grants from Hunterdon County and the Large Foundation.

A few of our donors are employed by firms that match their contributions. Please check to learn if that is a possibility to increase your donation.

Our commitment to keeping the historic church maintained this year included small projects like window glazing, electric lighting upgrades and roof maintenance. Those expenditures were over \$2,300.

We continue to support the professionals who are assisting us with site survey and wetlands delineation to respond to questions from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The DEP has been reduced in their ability to respond to our permit applications for constructing a historically accurate carriage shed building including bathrooms.

Debbie Cifelli continues to support us as a volunteer in tirelessly working to prepare grant applications and in researching additional opportunities for support. The Trustees are working hard to earn your trust as stewards of the Locktown Stone Church. Again, thank you for your support.

*Robert N. Roop, Treasurer*

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## 2019 Christmas Party



For many years the Trustees and Advisors had held their December Regular Meeting at a member's house and celebrated the holiday season with a pot luck dinner. Last year the Trustees decided to have a Christmas party inside the church where it could be opened up to supporters, friends and family. Advisor Andrea Mergentime headed the party committee which consisted of trustees Julie Huljack, Luise Wingerter and Wil Wong. Emeritus Trustee Phoebe Wiley provided the candle and floral decorations.

In keeping with our musical focus, the Trustees invited Leslie Dawe, a Delaware resident and her choral group Vox Six to perform traditional Christmas carols. The members of the six singer group included Carolyn Viol, Eleonora Lacuna, Andy Kettler, David Lovato, Logan Pitts and of course Leslie Dawe.

Some members of the choral group traveled to remote Locktown from New York City and beyond. Their choral performance of traditional Christmas carols was truly heavenly. At the end Vox Six lead everyone inside the church to sing along a few favorite carols. Some undiscovered vocal talents emerged as result.

The center pews of the church were rearranged to support long tables topped with a spread of savory and sweet dishes- all provided by supporters of the church. Drinks included mulled wine, apple cider and seemingly endless bottles of red wine. No doubt the drinks gave people courage in collective song.

After the carols, Santa arrived and gave out candy canes to children young and old.

A good time was had by all and a collective promise was made to repeat the event in 2020.



## Concert Series

*Caroline Beidelman*

Usually, at this time, I write an article for the annual Newsletter recapping our Fall Concert Series. Unfortunately, this year we decided, with a heavy heart, to cancel the Fall 2020 Concert Series due to the pandemic. Though at the time of our decision, things seemed to have stabilized, we heeded warnings of a resurgence in the fall. That is, unfortunately, exactly what has happened. Our primary concern was the health & safety of our supporters and the musicians who planned to perform. As we have seen by now, most music/performance venues have had to make the same difficult decisions. All New York Broadway shows through May 2021 have been canceled. The New York Philharmonic, the New Jersey Symphony and the Metropolitan Opera have also seen their concert seasons canceled through May-June 2021 due to ongoing safety concerns surrounding the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Philadelphia Orchestra has changed its programming for the first four months of the season to repertoire for between just 25 and 50 players for social distancing, with no live audience. Their concerts will be filmed at the Mann Center in September and October, and in Verizon Hall in November and December.

While we know we made the right decision, it was difficult

to cancel an outing so many of our supporters enjoy. We tried to think of ways to bring music to our supporters; however, we do not have internet at the church and cell service there is very spotty....at best. Even if we did, such recordings could never capture the magical acoustics which attract music lovers to our concert series.

During this time of multiple performance cancellations, it is important to remember the musicians whose livelihood has also been drastically curtailed. Some musicians can play in small groups wearing a mask, but we cannot expect singers or woodwind players to do this. The groups with whom I had made arrangements for the Fall 2020 series completely understood our canceling and expressed a desire to perform for the Fall 2021 series. I sincerely hope the ensembles remain together, and the vocal soloist from Paris, France, will be able to fit us in her schedule. We look forward to having them perform next Fall.

The Friends of the Locktown Stone Church look forward to bringing live music back to Locktown Stone Church, with a live audience once again reveling in the magical acoustics. Until that time comes, we can only wish that you all stay safe and healthy during the upcoming holiday season.

## The Scenery Will Be Changed

*Mark Zdepski*

The skyline over Locktown Stone Church will be different in December with the removal of the large ash tree from the southwest corner of the courtyard because it endangers the building. This tree and another next to the road are dying due to the Emerald Ash Borer. The dead wood is brittle and can easily break in a wind storm. The work has been scheduled since late August, but our tree service is swamped with the work of removing similarly infested trees for other customers.

It was the Trustee's original intention to remove the two trees during the spring, but the one next to the Locktown-Sergeantsville Road has an anchor cable belonging to Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) attached to one of its branches. Our tree service will not remove the tree until that anchor cable is taken down. It took sometime before JCP&L responded to our telephone calls, but after they had been appraised of the situation, a field engineer staked out a location, on Church property, for installing a new anchoring pole and an anchoring bolt. The location they prefer is directly adjacent to the walkway from the road to the front door.

The Church and grounds are owned by Delaware Township, so the Trustees sought help from Mayor Charlie Herman. Mayor Herman agreed that a new pole and anchor is inappropriate for the Church property and after speaking with them about

the pole placement, referred the Trustees to his JCP&L contacts. The result of the Township refusal to allow they pole was that JCP&L designed a bracing pole to be installed along Locktown School Road on property that is owned by Ray Schenk. JCP&L then produced a one-sided access

agreement for Ray to sign and supposedly is inflexible as to language changes. Nothing has happened since that point.

The Township Arborist, A.R. Willey, examined the trees at our request. He concurred that the large tree in the courtyard needs to come down soon, as it endangers the structure. However, he also suggested that the tree along Locktown-Sergeantsville Road is a lower priority, as that one leans away from the Church toward the JCP&L powerlines. So this is where it stands at this point, we have one tree which is inside the courtyard scheduled for removal on November 23, 2020.



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## Aston Martin Owners' Club Summer Road Tour



On a sunny day in early August a small group of Aston Martin Car Owners from NJ, PA and NY met up at Natirar State Park in Peapack for a scenic 1 hour long drive heading west. The historic

Locktown Stone Church was the end destination. As many recently opened public restaurants were overcrowded on weekends, the parking lot and courtyard of the church was an ideal place to gather privately for a celebratory drink at the end of the tour.

Members of the car club were masked and/or stayed socially distanced as they toured the church premises inside and out. Most had never been to the church before and were impressed by its quiet beauty. Some said they would return in future when concerts resume.



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