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FROM THE FRONT PORCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF MOORESTOWN



View From the Porch

A century has passed since the United States made the momentous decision to join Great Britain and the Allied forces in World War I. Throughout 2017, organizations across the nation have been commemorating the 100-year anniversary of this decision, and we at the Historical Society of Moorestown are doing the same. In addition to upcoming speaker events that we will continue to announce, our staff of volunteers are planning an exhibit that will illustrate the war's impact on Moorestown and Burlington County. The exhibit is a major undertaking. We are digging through dozens of photographs. We are scanning through reels and reels of old newspapers. We are combing through our archives of local family letters. For many of us at the historical society, putting together these exhibits is a major reason why we joined the organization. Resurrecting long-forgotten people and their ideas about the world around them provides such meaningful insight into past eras. Their thoughts and actions help us understand how previous generations coped with frightening change and fractured societies. We can even see a bit of our own societal pain in the material they left behind since the past never dissipates: its effects coil around us for centuries. We invite you to learn about World War I with us. Please join us on Thursday, October 5th in the Moorestown Community House's Club Room for our Fall Meeting in which we will have the opportunity to hear from Seton Hall Professor Emeritus Dr. Richard Connors who will provide an overview of World War I: a war that is commonly misunderstood. Also, keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for information about the opening of our exhibit and future guest speakers.

In addition to our World War I

endeavors, we are excited to say that our Moorestown Ghost Tours will be back this fall. The ghost tours have become a Moorestown tradition over the years, and we look forward to seeing all of you who return every year to stroll along our town's hallowed lanes and hear the tales of specters and spirits that inhabit the homes and shops in our historic downtown. If you have not yet experienced our ghost tours, make this the year that you finally learn about the haunted history that lives in our town. The fall also marks the return of our Sunday house tours. The Smith-Cadbury Mansion will be open from 1 PM to 3 PM every second and fourth Sunday of the month now through June. If you have never seen the mansion or if it has been a while since your last visit, take a Sunday afternoon stroll to our home that we take such great pride in preserving.

Lastly, while we were disappointed that construction of Moorestown's new dog park went forward without allowing local archeologists a proper opportunity to recover and remove historic artifacts from the land, we do hope that the Swedes Barn – which many of our members worked hard to restore and maintain – finally achieves more widespread recognition as a Moorestown landmark and symbol. The bucolic beauty that surrounds the barn and dog park provides a glimpse into Moorestown's agricultural and Quaker past. As we return from vacations and resume the sometimes breakneck speed of our daily lives, perhaps a walk along the paths near Swedes Barn will help us remember that we live in a town with a rich history of simple, community living, and we are responsible for maintaining that tradition.

Mickey DiCamillo, President

mdicam@hotmail.com



House Tours and Gift Shop Hours:

2nd & 4th Sunday 1-3 PM
Tuesdays 1-3 PM

Research Library Hours:

Tuesday 1-4 PM
Second Sunday of
each Month 1-3 PM

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*Published by
The Historical Society
of Moorestown*

SEPTEMBER 2017

The Interesting History of Moorestown Homes: Chester & Central

The house on the northwest corner of Chester and Central Avenues is a contributing property in the historic district, built in 1884. The description in the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form reads as follows:

400 - "J. Elfreth Watkins House" 2 1/2-story Queen Anne-style house. Brick first floor, slate shingled and half-timbered above. Wraparound porch with Eastlake-inspired balustrade. Molded red brick and tan brick belt course beneath porch roof. Side entrance, multi-light transom and sidelights. Secondary entrance along side (E. Central) elevation, French doors. 6/1 double hung windows. Second floor and attic sash Queen Anne multi-light/1 double hung. Casement sash in small triangular dormer. Shed roof dormers flank either side of decorative brick chimney, facing E. Central. Carriage House, c.1885; board and batten siding, Queen Anne sash, porch-fronted with turned posts central cross gable at roof line, gabled dormer, slate shingled roof. – Contributing

J. Elfreth Watkins was one of Moorestown's more interesting residents, for a time. His biography from the Smithsonian Institution Archives states:

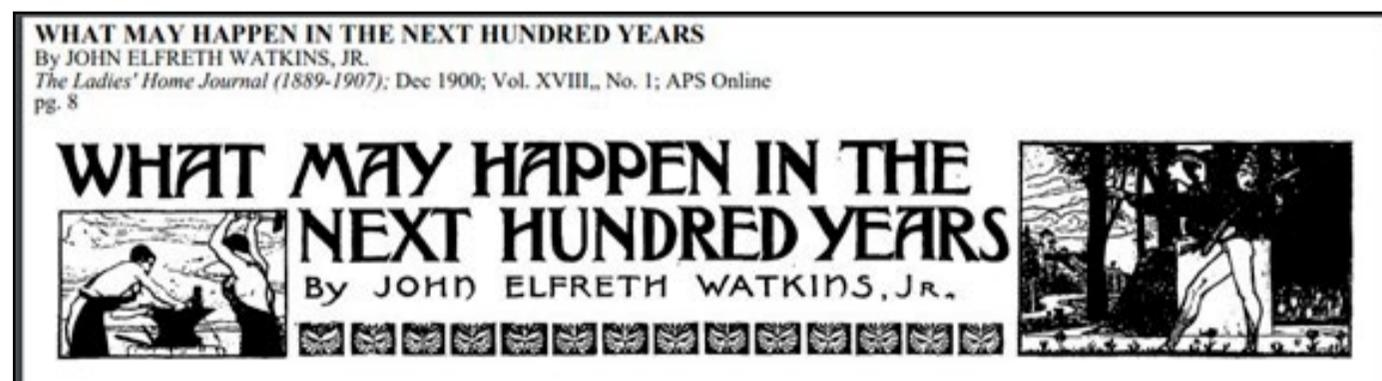
"J. Elfreth Watkins (1852-1903), a railroad employee and museum curator, was employed by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Company as a mining engineer from 1871 to 1872. He then joined the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in 1872 as an Assistant Engineer of Construction. After a disabling accident in 1873, Watkins was employed as a Chief Clerk from 1874 to 1886 for the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Camden and Atlantic Railroad. In 1885, while still a railroad employee, Watkins was offered an honorary curatorial position in the Section of Steam Transportation, Department of Arts and Industries in the United States National Museum (USNM), [aka, the Smithsonian Institution.]

In 1887 he was promoted to Curator of Transportation. Watkins returned to the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1892 to prepare its exhibit for the World's Columbian Exposition as Director of Industrial Arts. In 1895 he returned to the USNM as Curator of Technological Collections and in 1898 was named Curator of the Division of Technology (Modern Phases). He also served as Engineer of Property, 1888-1889, and Chief of Buildings and Superintendence, 1896-1903, for the USNM."

In his spare time, Watkins was the original founder and editor of the Moorestown Chronicle from 1879 to 1883, the founder and editor of the Haddonfield Argus from 1880 to 1881, and the founder and editor of the Jamesburg Record from 1881 to 1882. He was a prolific writer, contributing to numerous publications such as The Railroad Gazette, various Smithsonian publications, Harper's Weekly, and others.

He also wrote an article for The Ladies Home Journal in December 1900, entitled "What May Happen in the Next Hundred Years". The full list of predictions can be found at the website:

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/staff/t/w/twa101/whatmayhappen.pdf>



Some of his predictions were amazingly accurate – digital color photography, mobile phones, hothouse vegetables, television, and high speed trains. Some not so much – the letters C, X, and Q will become obsolete, university education will be free to all, and mosquitoes, flies and roaches will be a thing of the past.

Watkins also built the house at 405 East Second St. in 1887, but he never lived there.

— Stephanie Herz

The Historical Society of Moorestown

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The glass plate outdoor photography of Moorestown's William H. Roberts, which began sometime in the 1880s, took place in the dry plate era, which was fortunate for him and for us. The earlier glass negatives of the wet variety needed to be exposed while the emulsion coating on the glass was still wet and would not have survived well or even stayed wet in the saddle bags of his bicycle as he went with them and his camera to take photographs around Moorestown and the surrounding area.

We are indebted to him for preserving in pictures things that people at the time must have considered just part of the ordinary background of their lives.

He sometimes ventured into nearby Cinnaminson. Moorestown and Cinnaminson had been part of the old Chester Township up until their separation in 1860, and there were still many social and family connections to that farming community.

And so we come to a pair of interesting pictures he took in 1896, two views of a mysterious little building along Riverton Road.

The first view (top, right photo) looks in the direction away from Moorestown. It was taken near the intersection of Pomona Road and Riverton Road. The curve ahead is the one that leads us to the Westfield Friends School and Meeting House and the Burlington Pike (U.S. Route 130).

This second view (bottom, right photo) has us looking back from the curve toward Moorestown. William Roberts described both views as "Riverton Road below A. C. Wood's". Today, Cinnaminson's Wood Park is located just across Pomona Road from where the little building stood.



Intersection of Pomona Road and Riverton Road looking northwest along Riverton Road, toward "Rt. 130" in 1896; Westfield Public School at left



Looking back from the curve seen in the top picture, toward Moorestown in 1896; Westfield Public School at right

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

While by its shape and bell tower the little building might be mistaken for a country church, it was in fact a school house and appears as such at the location on both J. D. Scott's 1876 and G. M. Hopkins 1877 maps of Cinnaminson, with Hopkins notation "pub. School". These are the earliest known pictures of the Westfield Public School, built in 1870. At the time public schools in New Jersey were commonly supported by the students' parents rather than taxes. In 1871 the State Legislature passed an act which collected taxes for the purpose of paying for local public schools after most towns had been slow in doing so themselves.

Westfield was the name of the village in the vicinity of the intersection of Riverton Road and Burlington Pike.

As Lloyd E. Griscom describes in his 1981 book *Tales of Three Towns: Cinnaminson, Palmyra & Riverton*, the existence of another Westfield in New Jersey with a post office by that name prevented the locality's first post office, established about 1835 at the intersection of Burlington Pike and Riverton Road, from using the name Westfield. Instead, the more ancient name of Cinnaminson, one of the historic spelling variations of the Lenape place-name, was revived for use by the post office. This led to the choice of that unique name for the township itself in 1860.

The little two-room Westfield Public School, built in 1870, existed more than 100 years, the majority of those years hiding in plain sight, as part of another building.



The expanded 1870 Westfield Public School (left) and the 1922 brick building, later known as the Strabel School, as viewed from the school playground in 1943

The picture above is from the 1943 book *A Story of the Public Schools of Burlington County New Jersey, A Historical Narrative and Pictorial Review*, compiled by a committee of the Burlington County Supervisors' Association.

The view is from the playground side, with Riverton Road on the far side of the buildings. Pomona Road, if we could see it, is to the right. The large brick building, built in 1922, stood at the corner and was connected to the older building by means of a covered hallway, about half of which is visible here.

In the picture, the two-room brick 1870 schoolhouse is the left section of the first floor of the older building. Notice the lintels over the 1870 ground floor windows. They were not duplicated over the windows of the frame construction additions that make up the rest the older building.

(continued on page 5)

BUSINESS CORNER

BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS

Local businesses play an important role when they support the preservation of Moorestown's history. We welcome and thank our inaugural business members!

BENEFACTOR

Powers Kirn, LLC

EVENT SPONSOR

Whitesell Construction

Fletcher Brothers

Roofing and Siding

BAYADA Home Health Care

LIBRARY SPONSOR

Armstrong Pediatric
Dental, LLC

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BUSINESS PARTNER

Kathryn B. Supko,
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Moorestown Construction

FRIENDS

Diane Walker,
Colorstone Gardens

Remember Me
Stationery and Gifts

Moorestown Hardware

Parkeon

Your generous support helps to sustain the Society's commitment to preserving Moorestown's heritage for generations to come.
Again, thank you!

New Business memberships are always welcome; for details, visit us at <http://moorestownhistory.org/membership/become-a-business-partner/>

(continued from page 4)

The additions were the result of a consolidation of schools and redistribution of students to the Westfield School. The first addition in 1906 was a single one story classroom added to the side toward Pomona Road, for a total of three classrooms. According to the official class registers preserved by the district on microfilm, the 1906-1907 school year was the first year for this third classroom and the three classrooms were split into grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6-7-8-9. The following year the oldest class stopped at 8th grade, which was more normal.

By the 1909-1910 school year, the Westfield school was still using the three classrooms, for grades: 1-2, 3-4-5, and 6-7-8.

The second addition came in 1910 when a second story was built above all three rooms. As the class registers show, this was done in time for the 1910-1911 school year. It created two new classrooms over the original two, for a total of only four classrooms, since the 1906 one-room addition and the floor above it contained a stairwell with a landing. Grades in the four classrooms were then: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8.

These two additions completed the physical transformation of the 1870 school into the building on the left side of the 1943 picture.

At the right is a contemporary picture taken near the location of the first picture in this article. The grassy area at the corner is approximately where the two buildings once stood. For those of us driving by who remember those buildings, the area looks too small to have held them.

The building in the picture is Cinnaminson's Memorial School, original part built in 1955-56 as the new elementary school building. Soon came the construction of Cinnaminson's first housing development, with many more coming in the 1960s.

By the mid 20th century, a variety of factors had made local farming less profitable and there began a period of population growth that would mark the beginning of the end for much of Cinnaminson's rural character. The older schools were superseded by Cinnaminson's present day set of schools, built to accommodate the increase in student population.

The building with the 1870 classrooms was demolished first. And then, in 1984, the large 1922 brick building (since 1963 known as the William J. Strabel School) was demolished also.

The original engraved stone from the 1870 school is shown at right. It and other items of Cinnaminson school history are on display in the showcase located in the lobby of the Memorial School building, the present home of the district's administrative offices.

Much appreciation is expressed to Jean M. Becker, retired 35 year Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Cinnaminson Schools, for sharing her interest in the history of the schools, delving into archival school records and for finding information not available elsewhere.



Contemporary photo showing the corner of Riverton Road and Pomona Road where the Westfield and Strabel Schools once stood



Original stone from the 1870 Westfield Public School

— John Watson

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

One of the benefits of membership at the Historical Society is our participation in Time Travelers.

Time Travelers is a free reciprocal membership network for historical museums, sites, and societies throughout the United States. If you're planning to travel, remember to cut out the back page of this newsletter that includes your address label and bring it with you to receive a variety of exclusive benefits and privileges, such as free admission, gift shop discounts, and more. Currently, the Time Travelers program includes over 300 organizations in more than 40 states across the country. Visit timetravelers.mohistory.org for a list of participating institutions.

To take advantage of the Time Travelers program make sure your membership is current! If you have not yet renewed, please use the form below or renew online through PayPal at our website: moorestownhistory.org/membership. If you are unsure of your membership status, look at the address label on this newsletter. If the date next to your name is 04/18 your membership is current, all other dates indicate that it's time to renew!

An exciting benefit at the History Partner level (\$100) is an engraved brick in our Pathway to History. This is a great way to commemorate a special occasion or person. New members are always welcome. If you have a friend or neighbor who might be interested in supporting the Historical Society by joining us, they can become a member through our website or send us an email with their address and we'll send membership information to them via mail.

A reminder that our website at moorestownhistory.org is a great resource for our membership. You'll find information on our current exhibit, upcoming events, reviews and photos from past events, membership forms, and a beautiful color edition of our newsletter. Take a look!

We extend a warm welcome to our newest member:

- Elizabeth Gorman •

Looking forward to sharing history with you soon,

Jill Weiss, Membership Chair
moorestownhistory@comcast.net



Are you good at fundraising? If so, we need your help!

We are seeking individuals with energy and ideas to help us in our fundraising efforts.



Jobs — big and small — that we need help with:

Activities/Events: Helps plan, organize and hold Society events.

Docents: Museum and special exhibit guides.

Exhibits: Helps create interesting displays.

Fund Raising: Helps plan and hold income-generating events.

Museum: Helps with maintaining collection.

Oral History: Collects oral histories and oversees written work.

Photography: Attends events and take digital photos for our archives and publicity.

Programs: Helps select programs and speakers, coordinates meetings.

Publicity/News/Web: Helps get Society information to the members and public.

If you can help out, call the Society at 856-235-0353



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

BASIC MEMBERSHIP:

- Student (\$10) Individual/Family (\$35)

DONOR LEVELS:

- Stories From the Past Sponsor (\$50)
 History Partner (\$100)
 Library Sponsor (\$250)
 Patron (\$500) Benefactor (\$1000)

RENEWAL

NEW

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Visit our website,
moorestownhistory.org
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NAME(S):

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Make check payable to: Historical Society of Moorestown

Mail to: P.O. Box 477 Moorestown, NJ 08057

Or renew online at: moorestownhistory.org/membership

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2017

- 5 Smith-Cadbury reopens after summer break Library & tours, 1-4
- 10 Smith-Cadbury tours & research Library, 1-3
- 12 Smith-Cadbury library & tours, 1-4
- 19 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 24 Smith-Cadbury tours, 1-3
- 26 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4

GHOST TOURS

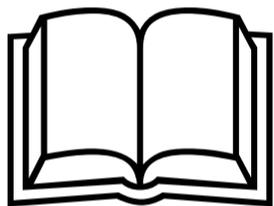
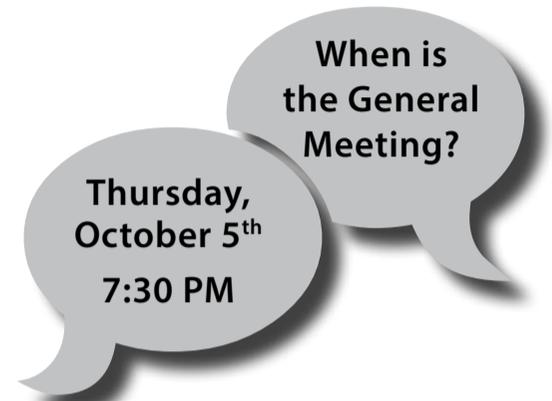
TICKETS AT THE DOOR
12 High Street, Smith-Cadbury
Mansion, Moorestown, NJ

OCTOBER 2017

- 3 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 5 **General Meeting**, 7:30 at the Community House; Our Speaker is Dr. Richard Connors author of *New Jersey and the Great War*
- 8 Smith-Cadbury tours & research Library, 1-3
- 10 Smith-Cadbury library & tours, 1-4
- 13 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, Smith-Cadbury
- 14 *Autumn in Moorestown*, Smith-Cadbury open 10-3
- 14 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, Smith-Cadbury
- 17 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 20 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, Smith-Cadbury
- 21 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, Smith-Cadbury
- 22 Smith-Cadbury tours, 1-3
- 24 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 27 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, Smith-Cadbury
- 28 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, Smith-Cadbury
- 31 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4

NOVEMBER 2017

- 7 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 12 Smith-Cadbury tours & research Library, 1-3
- 14 Smith-Cadbury library & tours, 1-4
- 21 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4
- 26 Smith-Cadbury closed for Thanksgiving Weekend
- 28 Smith-Cadbury Library & tours, 1-4



LIBRARY NEWS

The Historical Society Library recently received a large donation of items related to the old Moorestown Stiles Family from John Stiles, all the way from Idaho! Included were:

- ☞ several rare ancient Quaker books from the 18th and early 19th century, including:
 - The 1760 *Collection of Quaker Testimonies Concerning Several Ministers of the Gospel Amongst the People Called Quaker, Deceased: With Some of their last Expressions and Exhortations*,
 - The 1841 *Remembrancer or Fragments for Leisure Hours*,
 - An 1859 book about Robert Raikes concerning the history of the Sunday School movement,
- ☞ a 1791 Stiles family bible,
- ☞ genealogy charts for the Stiles and LeConey families,
- ☞ a touching 1823 hand written letter describing the last days of Isaac Stiles,
- ☞ and a sampler created by Priscilla Stiles in 1824 when she was 9 years old.

The Museum and Library are almost always interested in objects, photos, books, newspapers (especially late 19th/early 20th century Chronicle issues) and archival materials that help tell the story of Moorestown.

FYI: Library volunteers are often asked by residents about the kinds of restrictions placed by the Historical Society on the renovation and repair of historic homes in town. They are always surprised to learn that the Historical Society has no jurisdiction over these activities. Of course, we would always hope that the historic character of the home be maintained as much as possible — the library has some pamphlets on the subjects that might be helpful in guiding the process.

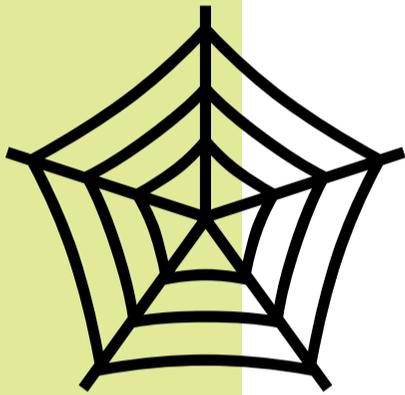
— Stephanie Herz

Our Apologies *The June 2017 Issue misspelled the name of our memorial scholarship; the scholarship is given in memory of former Trustee Sara Franklin Homer.*

**Historical Society of
Moorestown**

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Moorestown, NJ 08057

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SEPTEMBER 2017

FALL MEETING

Guest Speaker:

**Dr. Richard
Connors**

**Author of *New Jersey
and the Great War***

**will discuss World
War I from a global,
American and New
Jersey perspective**

**OCTOBER
5th at 7:30**

The construction of "Camp Dix" (since renamed "Fort Dix") began in June 1917 in Burlington County. It was built as a training and staging ground during World War I. Below is an excerpt from the publication *CAMP DIX Described and Photographed* by Roger Batchelder; page 4; published in 1918 by Small, Maynard & Company, Inc.:

THE BUILDING OF CAMP DIX

Before the eventful month of June, 1917, few people of the outside world, or even of New Jersey itself, had heard of Wrightstown. Or, if the name was at all familiar, it was because they had lost their way while motoring, and gone far from the main highways. It was merely one of the hundreds of obscure New Jersey villages which had neither flourished nor declined materially since the days when Washington crossed the Delaware. The rich soil of the marl region had proved so valuable for farming that the natives had preferred the peaceful occupation of growing wheat and corn for the New York markets to the industries with which large numbers of workers are associated. And so Wrightstown had "stayed put"; had it not been for the aberration of the German Empire, it would still be "put," and its placid, monotonous existence would not have been disturbed. But when, early in June, the agents of the government, after riding many miles through that agricultural region, interspersed here and there by pine forests, came to Wrightstown, they put their heads together and nodded approvingly. Here was a possible site for a camp, neither too far from the great centres for obtaining the requisite supplies, nor yet within objectionable proximity to the cities. The climate was ideal; the surroundings and natural advantages were incomparable. And so the lamp of Aladdin was rubbed and the genie was summoned to begin his work.

The contract for the construction of the camp was awarded to the Irwin and Leighton Company of Philadelphia, and immediately the great task was begun. About two hundred people, farmers for the most part, lived on the four thousand acres which were apportioned to Camp Dix. As the fields of corn and wheat were ripening for the harvest, some of the farmers were reluctant to give their lands at first. But the military authorities were liberal with them; they explained the necessity of the land for the training of the draft men, and eventually persuaded the natives to leave their homesteads without compulsion.