

# THE SWEDESBORO HISTORIC LEDGER

SWEDESBORO-WOOLWICH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PO BOX 542  
SWEDESBORO, NJ 08085  
856-467-1693

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The Swedesboro-Woolwich Historical Society meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building in Swedesboro.

Copies of the Swedesboro Historic Ledger are available at Borough Hall, Trinity Church, Mugs, and the Swedesboro Library Branch.

## MISSING IN ACTION: CORPORAL JAMES L. PLUMMER

By Ben Carlton

On the third day of the Battle of Chancellorsville, at the height of the raging conflict, a severely wounded James Plummer was left on the contested field despite valiant efforts by his comrades-in-arms to assist him. He was never seen or heard from again.

Plummer had enlisted at Woodbury, New Jersey, in the second summer of the war at President Lincoln's urgent call for "300,000 More" volunteers to put down the Rebellion. Plummer joined Company F, the all Gloucester County company of the 12th New Jersey Infantry. He was mustered into the ranks at Camp Stockton at the county seat on 29 July 1862.

Just 18 years old, Plummer was a "quick, bright young man" living at Swedesboro prior to his enlistment. His father, the senior James Plummer, was the proprietor of Plummer's Hotel, a well-known establishment at the south end of town. It seems that the elder Plummer was "so patriotic as to be willing for his loved son to go [to war] with the others from that town," according to the Twelfth's regimental historian. However, young Plummer seems to have been a reluctant soldier. He did not adjust readily to the army, balking at the harsh discipline "more rigid than at his father's house" — bad food, and the discomforts of life at camp and on the march. Although Plummer found his niche in the quartermaster's department, "doing good

service," and eventually becoming "reconciled to his surroundings," one wonders if Plummer volunteered more out of filial obedience than from ardent feelings of patriotism.

Plummer's patriotism and courage would be severely tested at Chancellorsville, the 12th New Jersey's first battle, which began well but ended badly for the Union. General Joseph Hooker had crossed the Rapidan River, stealing a march on General Lee and the outnumbered Rebel army. Hooker was about to outflank Lee when "Fighting Joe" inexplicably reigned in his troops just as the army was about to break out of the area that was known locally as the Wilderness. Hooker handed the initiative over to Lee as the Union army dug in near the Chancellor house and awaited a Confederate attack. For the first two days of the battle, the boys of the 12th New Jersey were ordered to take up one position after another as marching and countermarching finally brought them to an open field where the brigade formed a line of battle. There on 3 May 1863, scattered shots rang out in the predawn darkness before the firing became general. The 12th Regiment fired its first volley into a dimly seen enemy, advancing through the trees. When the Rebels were just 50 or 60 yards from the Union line, the Twelfth began to suffer heavy casualties as the troops traded volleys with the enemy. Suddenly at the height of



*Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*  
Rescuing the Wounded—Chancellorsville Campaign, 3 May 1863

the Confederate assault, the 14th Connecticut—the regiment on the Twelfth's immediate right flank—gave way, leaving the Jerseymen exposed to enfilading fire. Company F, on the extreme right of the Twelfth's line, was unable to stand the onslaught for long. As they broke for the rear, the entire Twelfth Regiment was forced to fall back, leaving their dead and wounded on the ground where they fell.

As the regiment retreated to a position near the Union artillery and reformed its line, some of the boys of Company F attempted to rescue their wounded comrades. Captain Edward Stratton, the company commander, had been left lying helpless on the battlefield with a shattered knee. But his brother, Lieutenant James Stratton, and two soldiers carried him to safety. Private George Meley of Swedesboro, managed to find his fellow townsman, James Plummer, who had been grievously wounded.

(continued to page 4)

## Oral History of Norma Lang as Told to Elaine Rode on April 23, 1999



Norma Lang-  
Ninety-seven years old

Norma Patterson Lang: born March 1910

Parents: Samuel B. Patterson— father Laura S. Lippincott Patterson— mother

Grandparents: father's side: Issac N. Patterson & Emma Pidgeon (d. 1910). Mother's side: Nathan Lippincott (a Quaker/went to meetings in Woodstown) & Fannie Lippincott (both lived in Auburn at campground area)

Mother's siblings: (9 in family— Lippincott)

Laura—oldest, Frances (appendicitis—incision never healed, Hannah (married John Rode), Leona, Emeline (died), Alice, Nathan (married Gertrude Rode & lived on Sharptown Road), Alvin (married Grace). 9th is a question

Norma's mother, Laura, taught school before she was married. After a certain age you could teach with no educational requirements. She drove a horse and wagon to school and left it at Mike Morrison's house (Mildred & Mary West's Road to Harrisonville. The school was near there).

Norma's father was a farmer and lived in the Beckett area of Oldman's Creek Road. He got snappers from streams there. Snapper (turtle) meat

was used for church suppers. Her father bought a warehouse from Issac Patterson near Helm's Ave., and Railroad Ave. (Sam B. Patterson warehouse). It was eventually bought by the Ficcocharios but later burned down. Young boys made crates for the produce which were stored there for farmers. Also they stored seeds. Tom Lyons, father of Percy Lyons, and Marion Lyons Scott, was the forman. The Lyons family lived in a large house on Weatherby Ave.

Norma lived at 111 East Avenue with her parents. Her siblings were Issac N. Patterson born 1908, (Norma came next 1910), Dorothy Patterson Ade 1915, and Samuel L. Patterson 1917.

Issac Patterson, her grandfather lived on the corner of East and Thompson Avenues where Leibfarths lived (1st house, Norma's (3rd), and Northdufts (2nd)

Home: The bathroom was inside. No electricity at first—had gas lights. Their home was heated by a coal furnace. After the coal burned, ashes had to be taken out of the heater every few days and dumped outside. There was no washing machine for washing clothes. Norma's mother boiled water on the stove, a combination of coal and gas stove. Two large tubs were

placed on a bench with a washboard in the hotwater tub. Clothes were cleaned by rubbing them on the board. Soap was homemade bars. Fat and lye, plus other things, were boiled together and poured into pans and the mixture eventually hardened. Clothes were wrung by hand and everything was hung outside on clothes lines.

Brooms were used to clean the rugs. There were no vacuum cleaners. Sometimes the smaller rugs were hung on clotheslines and beaten with a rug beater. Rug beaters were made of wicker. They had summer and winter rugs which were rolled up when not in use and stored somewhere until the change of seasons.

There were no refrigerators, only ice boxes. One side of the box held a large block of ice which was delivered by an iceman every few days or maybe once a week.

The ice box was insulated so that it would not melt too rapidly. A large pan under the ice box caught the water from the melted ice and it had to be emptied every day. Ice was cut from Narriticon Lake using horses. Meadows were also flooded so that ice could be cut from it. Big blocks were stored with straw and sawdust between them. An ice house was near the railroad. Some food was kept in the cool cellars of houses in wire cages.

Bathrooms: Many farm houses did not have an inside toilet and a wooden outhouse was used. Not too nice when you had to get up at night to go. There was no running water like spigots or faucets in the farm houses. (go to pg. 4)

## YOUNG HOUSE By Deborah Morris and Family



The Young Home

Located in historic Swedesboro, New Jersey, along the equally historic Kings Highway, can be found the former home of Maxcermon P. Young and his wife, Sallie J. Young. Mr. Young was the gravedigger for the First Presbyterian Church of Swedesboro, located at 1526 Kings Highway, no more than a half block from his home. He purchased the lot from the estate of Sarah G.

Harker on April 1, 1874, for \$114.00, and later received a mortgage in the amount of \$300 on June 9, 1874, from William Black—the year the home was built. The mortgage was paid-in-full only six years

later, in October 1880.

The Young home has its own unique history. In 1901 Mr. Young sold the home with its seven bedrooms, formal parlor, pocket doors, and red oak mahogany floors, not to mention a rear set of stairs, to his widowed Aunt, Achsah Worrell. Many older Swedesboro residents remember her daughters Euphemia and Lillie Worrell. Lillie was associated with the Swedesboro Library until her death in 1967. The home then was transferred to the Gauntt family and remained within that family until 1994. Through all these transitions, the home still retains its original exterior façade. It has been

said that the façade, hand-laid by a mason, is one of only five known in the New Jersey area. The other five are in Haddonfield, Mullica Hill, and the North Jersey area. The interior has remained intact with no major upgrades since being built. The home still contains the original well pump, cast iron tub, and wainscoting within the rear entrance and bathroom.

The Young home today continues to exhibit the love and charm of its builders and to build a history of Swedesboro friends and families which visit and live within its walls.



Plaque at the house

## BATTLES ONCE FOUGHT ON OUR OWN SOILS BROUGHT FREEDOM BY BILL COZENS—Reprinted From *The New Town Press*/October 2001

New Jersey has been called both the “crossroads” and the “cockpit” of the American War for Independence.

But most historians have confined their writings to those activities in central and northern parts of the state. With the exception of Red Bank and Hancock’s Bridge, southern New Jersey, especially the area bounded by Mantua and Oldsmans Creeks, has been ignored.

However, between the autumn of 1777 and the spring of 1778, this area was a beehive of activity.

In early October of 1777, about 1500 British troops under the command of Col. Thomas Stirling landed somewhere south of the American fortification at Billingsport (some say at the mouth of the Raccoon Creek near Bridgeport).

After forcing the evacuation of the position (Lt. Col. Robert Brown of Swedesboro commanded militia troops there), the British marched cross county (exact route disputed) to Kings Highway enroute to Red Bank and Fort Mercer.

The British troops reached Kings Highway, which was somewhat east of its present day location, where they encountered a New Jersey artillery militia unit of a few hundred men under the command of Col. Silas Newcomb somewhere behind Dr. Bodo Otto’s house in Mickleton. Cannon balls were later found in the area.

Outnumbered the militia retired to positions on the Mantua Creek near the present day Kings Highway crossing. A skirmish resulted in deaths of two or three British soldiers but no recorded American losses. Again being outnumbered, the militia retired northward after tearing up the bridge across the creek.

A sign commemorating this action will be placed there in November by the East Greenwich Historical Society.

On March 16, 1778, another skirmish was fought behind the Bodo Otto house near Saunders Run. Here, American militia forces, under the command of Capt. Samuel Hugg, did battle with British forces under the command of Col. Charles Mawhood who had been responsible for the massacre at Hancock’s Bridge, south of Salem.

Again outnumbered, Hugg’s men retired. No mention of casualties have been reported.

In retaliation, the British torched Otto’s house. He was at Valley Forge with his father and brother, treating the sick and wounded.

The spring of 1778, also brought the “great cattle drive.”

Gen. Anthony Wayne left Valley Forge to forage in South Jersey for cattle and horses to support the Continental Army at Valley Forge.

He marched to New Castle, Del. Where he was ferried across the river by then Captain John Barry (memorialized by the Commodore Barry Bridge) and landed at Finns Point. He spent a couple of days rounding up about 150 head of cattle and necessary fodder and on Feb. 21, started up Kings Highway enroute to Mount Holly.

After passing through Sharptown and perhaps with a quick nip at the 7 Star Tavern, he arrived in Swedesboro on Feb. 23.

What happened there has been described by Lutheran Church (now Trimity) Pastor Nickolas Collin in his journal.

“The American General Vain (Wayne) passed through here with a detachment of 300 men, of whom the greater part were miserably clothed, some without boots, others without socks. (Wayne) did not arrive till 12 o’clock at night and took his quarters in my house (parsonage). Just as he was about to go to bed, the sentries fired warning signals but nothing happened. He left the following day and on the morning at 11 a.m. a regiment of British regulars came to attack him but he had escaped. These troops came running and militia in Swedesborough barely had time to escape.”

The British moved south in a vain search for Wayne. On Feb. 26 the pastor at the Moravian Church on

Sharptown (Kings Highway) Road noted in his diary “over two thousand English troops passed on their way to Salem. Our house was full of soldiers.”

Wayne eventually got his cattle back across the Delaware River but whether they all fed American troops or ended up in English bellies is problematical.

It has been recorded that at about the time the cattle would have been arriving at Valley Forge, a vain young officer demanded to take charge of the cattle and deliver them to General Washington. He promptly lost them to British foragers in the neighborhood.

As late as June 12, just six days before the final British troops evacuated Philadelphia, skirmishes were still being fought. Rev. Fredrick records, “A skirmish took place nearby between the English and the Militiamen. One of the latter was killed.”

Although there were few recorded skirmishes in the East Greenwich, Logan, Swedesboro-Woolwich area, there were lots of confrontations between patriots and Tories, families and church brethren. (To be continued in our next Newsletter)

## Upcoming Events

### SEVEN QUILTS FOR SEVEN SISTERS

“A Stitch in Time”

February 12, 2008

6:30 p.m.

Sponsored by the Swedesboro Library Branch/

GCLS, the Swedesboro-Woolwich Historical Society, & H.E.L.P., Inc.

“Performers calling themselves “Seven Quilts for Seven Sisters” are originally of the Williams family of Clayton, New Jersey. Their quilt show, “A Stitich in Time,” travels back to the old south and days of

slavery in a performance featuring song, dance, history, stories, skits and quilts. Their lively performance depicts the joys of sisterhood and the trials of slave life and how quilting helped them cope. With their combined knowledge of African American Slave History and the practical craft of quilting, their program is dedicated to the idea of educating the public with entertainment.



## ORAL HISTORY (Continued from page 2)

Water was pumped up by a wooden pump outside or in a shed. To wash yourself, you had to pump water into a large pitcher and carry it into the house, dumping it into a large washbowl like a sink.

School: Normal started school in 1915 in the Swedesboro Grammar School which is now St. Josephs. She walked to school from East Avenue then home for lunch at 12:00 and back to school by 1:00 for the afternoon; walking home again later. Some parents brought their children to school by horse and wagon. There weren't any buses until later.

Her teachers were Miss Sally West (1st grade), Miss Elsie Mattson, Miss Nettie Wentz (married Marvin Rode) from Blackwood—played piano, Miss Margaret Costello, Miss Florence Hewes, and Mrs. Anna Ballinger (children Doris and Francis). Most lived around Swedesboro and they could not be married.

Norma wore muddy blouses and skirts. Blouses were long and buttoned to the skirts—no zippers—they were patented in 1913. Long underwear and long stockings were worn. The long underwear tucked down into the stockings. Tied hightop shoes were worn. She had buckled galoshes to wear when it rained. Shoes and galoshes were bought at Talman's Shoe Store on the main street of Swedesboro. Clothing was made by Aunt Bert Woodruff or they went to Philadelphia for clothing. When the grammar school became crowded, some classes were held on the top floor of White's Drug Store. That's where Kings n' Things is now (1999), the corner of Kings Highway and Franklin Street. Ben Smith had a barber shop on the basement floor there. Later a gift shop was there. (To be continued in next newsletter)

## Membership Application for the Swedesboro-Woolwich Historical Society

If you are not already a member we welcome you.  
Complete this application and mail to:

Swedesboro-Woolwich Historical Society  
P.O. Box 542  
Swedesboro, NJ 08085

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues: \$5.00 Life Membership: \$100.00

Please enclose a check payable to the:  
**Swedesboro-Woolwich Historical Society**

Check out the Historical Society at:  
[www.swedesboro-nj.us](http://www.swedesboro-nj.us)

## IMAGES OF AMERICA

In cooperation with the Swedesboro-Woolwich Historical Society, Lois Stanley and Russell Shivelor are editing an Images of America book on Swedesboro and Woolwich Township. The book will contain pictures and informational text of the area from approximately the late 1800's to the 1960's. Currently needed are images of farms, farming equipment, and homes in the township. Homes and businesses in Swedesboro are also being sought. Pictures of recreational activities, scouts, clubs, service organization, church groups and parades are also needed. Credit will be given in the book if an image is used. All borrowed materials will be returned. If you can help, please call Lois Stanley at 856-467-1889. The Historical Society will profit from the sale of the book which is due to be published in time for holiday giving in 2008.

## MISSING IN ACTION: CORPORAL JAMES L. PLUMMER (Continued from page 1)

Together with Private John Connor, the two would-be rescuers were carrying Plummer toward the Union position when they were both hit by enemy fire. Connor was killed outright, but Meley managed to crawl to the rear with a severe leg wound. Plummer was left behind.

Back home in Swedesboro, James Plummer, Sr., anxiously awaited news about the outcome of the battle and the fate of his son. Sadly, the battle was lost and so was Corporal Plummer. Charles Garrison, noted physician and diarist from Swedesboro, recorded in his diary on 1 September 1863, almost four months after the Battle of Chancellorsville, that there was yet a glimmer of hope that Plummer had survived. "Most people gave him up [for dead]," Gar-

risson wrote, "but today there is a missing. Twenty-seven of those report that he is alive having been a prisoner all these months. Many of the highest among all companies in the cases have occurred since the War and possibly this may be true." But the hope that Plummer was still alive was unfounded, leaving Garrison to add a later rueful note: "[P]oor fellow. He was never found and Jimmy Plummer [Sr.] gave his son to the country—the only thing he was ever known to give for anything or anyone."

Corporal James Plummer was one of 16,800 casualties the Federals suffered at Chancellorsville as the Union army was whipped by a Confederate army only half its size. Losses for the 12th New Jersey were one officer and 23 enlisted men killed, 126 men wounded, and 22

casualties were from Company F—initially the Union dead and possibly this may be true." But where they fell on the battlefield. After the war, their remains were gathered up and interred at the national cemetery in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Of the more than 15,000 Union soldiers buried there, 13,000 are unknown. Corporal Plummer probably rests in one of those graves.



General Joseph Hooker  
Generals in Blue