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Historical Society of Moorestown



Smith - Cadbury Mansion
Moorestown, New Jersey
(built before 1738)

**A DESCRIPTION OF
MOORESTOWN**

IN 1875

**with comments on the
CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION
in Philadelphia
1876**

Price: \$1.00

the strawberry raisers and considerable is making also for the next which will be the Centennial Anniversary which will bring a great crowd of visitors to the city and make a great market for the berry.

Friend Wm. Collins has invited me to walk out to his patch on a lane just south of us and I find here four or five lots adjoining each other of an acre each given to the culture of them. The product of an acre is sometimes very great and up to one thousand dollars has been received as the result of an acre, when the prices are good and no glut in the market. The expense in labor and for the lot, attendance during the growing season to keep the beds clean and the cost of picking when ready for market amount to a large item yet I am assured that some persons on an acre lot have cleared several hundred dollars a season.

The fruit is very fine this season, many choice varieties are here introduced from the seeds just around us. I have set out some plants and hope by next season to have returns for the time and labor given to it.

On the 3rd July Jacob W. Stout, wife and daughter came over on a visit to us, taking tea with us and in the afternoon, I took him on a walk around the town. They returned in the evening at 8:40 being much pleased with the trip.

The celebration of the 4th July this year was extensive, held in the Park

and the fireworks in the evening was so elaborate and on such a large scale that the light was plainly visible with us and from our upper windows we could easily recognize some of the particular pieces of the display.

On the 20th July I attended a Picnic of the First Day School at Taunton, a place in the Pines about ten miles distant. It is a large bog or meadow which is subjected to overflow at certain seasons from the pond at hand which is effected by a dam across the creek at this place. This bog is devoted to raising cranberries and produces large quantities almost every season. A large building is on the premises which is now owned by a Mr. Hinchman who lives here a part of the year and has a number of men employed on the tract.

The grounds at this point are well shaded by trees and along the banks of the creek within the shade the visitors set their tables and consume their refreshments and the hospitality of the owner permits them the use of the building for heating and preparing their coffee, tea, etc.

There was a large attendance of the school parents and scholars and others and it was a day of enjoyment until near the close one of the boys came near being drowned in the pond and was only rescued by an expert swimmer at hand who brought him out safely. The pond is large and deep in places and was originally the site of a mill. During the summer season

Blue Ridge and South mountain distant hundred miles or more. Some of these elevations at points were used as signal stations and on Mount Laurel the remains of the station are still seen, some of the wood works and platforms remaining. It was before the period of the telegraph that the stations were used and signals exchanged along the line as far as New York to the Northeast and to Philadelphia at the Southwest.

1877

The 30th May being Decoration Day was very generally observed, and here in Moorestown a delegation of the Mechanics Association went to the different cemeteries and placed flowers on the graves of the soldiers therein buried and in the evening attended the Baptist church where a discourse appropriate to the occasion was delivered by. A. M. Street.

Throughout the country this day is observed in this way and the graves of both the Blue and the Grey are remembered. This feeling will doubtless continue for a generation or until the last soldier of the war remains to observe it.

On the morning of the 23rd June or late in evening of the 22nd some one or more persons came into the house and stole several articles of silverware, spoons, napkin rings, cream cup, etc., and escaped without awakening any of us and we have not been able to find any trace of the robbers or the articles taken.

The town has very poor regulations and is without street lights or efficient officers. In fact only one constable is employed in the town which is a mile or more in extent and he is not always on duty at night unless specially called upon.

Tramps from Camden and neighboring points frequently pass through the town and call upon citizens for help and sometimes for lodging at night and efforts are making to have them arrested and held until they explain the necessity for their seeking alms or to assure the officers that they are not imposters.

I continue to take walks in the vicinity of Moorestown, one to Palmyra on the river about five miles distant is a pleasant trip if the weather is not too warm for the way is mostly along a road without woodland or much shade. The road passes near the forks of the Pensauchen creek and is without hills or ridges to cross and the view is generally but little obstructed and if the walk is extended to Riverton and the return route by the Riverton road the route is increased considerably but over a fine road and through a beautiful tract of country of many fine buildings and improved properties and the way leads into the upper part of Moorestown by Chester Avenue.

Other walks such as out on the Hadonfield road to the creek and the secluded woods and ponds just below the crossing of the creek and by extending

it is frequently visited by parties of pleasure and Hinchman is kind in his offer of free use of the grounds to respectable and orderly parties. A number of deer occupy an enclosure on the premises and the water power is displayed in several jets and sprays and the walks along the creek and the lake of water is romantic and refreshing.

The Moorestown meeting is well attended and the ministry is supplied by Mary S. Lippincott and William Bordon. The First Day School is large and the Adult Bible class is well attended under the superintendency of Mary S. Lippincott who is a woman of intelligence and learning and very pleasant in her manner of address and explanation.

1876

On the 10th January we visited Robert Evans who resides on the Haddonfield road beyond the first creek and at the top of the hill about a mile and half from Moorestown. The property is well situated about half a mile from the station at Wilson's (Lenola) which requires of course this walk to meet the trains. Robert is engaged in business in the city and has to make daily trips to the metropolis.

On the 30th April I set out three poplar trees on the Second Street end of the lot, at precisely equal distances apart and as they are thrifty trees I hope in a few years to have them as lofty marks of the lot's boundary. I

have engaged a neighbor Lippincott to plough up the lot and put in such vegetables as are required and has commenced work on the 12th May.

The result of the election this year is very close and depends upon the result in a few close states. The first reports came favorable to Tilden the Democratic candidate but later returns seem to change the first returns and place the result in much doubt and there is much excitement over it throughout the country.

The reading circle of Moorestown meets with us occasionally and is just now very popular and tends to increase the social relations of the community and particularly of those belonging to the circle and the circle is made up mostly of those belonging to the Friends Society. It has a tendency to promote friendly and social intercourse.

It has met with us often. It has a secretary who keeps minutes of the meetings, the subject discussed, the books read before the meetings and the various questions and problems submitted and the answers when given by the person to whom the question was presented and altogether these meetings become interesting as well for the information imparted as the opportunity for social converse.

This Mount Laurel is one of the peculiar line of mounts or ridges which pass across the state of New Jersey in a southwestwardly direction and almost parallel with the higher ranges of the

this route to the crossing of the Friendship road and thence to the Camden pike and return by the pike makes an excursion of two or three miles with many points from which fine views are obtained of the surrounding country.

And during this month I visited the Fair at Mount Holly which is one of the largest and finest of any in the state, and the display of stock, cattle, hogs, horses, etc., and vegetable products attracted a large attendance. The trials of speed of the horses was particularly attractive and was the center point of the crowd.

1878

In my walks this month of September I visited the Forks Landing, the junction of the two branches of Pensauken creek, about two miles northwest of Moorestown and on the road to Palmyra. There is a mill located here belonging to Heulings of Moorestown and coal and lumber is brought up the creek from the Delaware by boats to this point and at one time much trade was done here, but the railroad has changed the course of traffic very much.

Early in October this year made a visit to Thomas Warrens and took a drive to Brown Mills and to some property belonging to Charles White situated in a low and swampy district and possessing little value as it cannot be cultivated to produce enough to repay the labor.

16

Brown Mills remains as of yore still a favorite summer resort for invalids and those who like quietness and a dry wholesome atmosphere laden with the aroma of the Pine and Cedar flora and the shade of the woods and the boating on the large mill pond which here spreads a wide expanse for a half mile or so before narrowing into the creek again to resume its sluggish flow to the Delaware.

1885

On the 31st May Mary S. Lippincott was at the Moorestown Meeting. She has removed to Camden and usually attends the meeting at that place and only occasionally visits us. Her many close and warm friends here welcome her with great pleasure and listen to her discourses with I believe much interest and profit but circumstances of a personal nature induce her to live with some friends in Camden and she will probably continue to remain there for the balance of her days.

On the 18th June I attended a meeting at the Hall to consider the question of establishing a bank here and the project was very favorably considered and is engaging the attention of those who are able to carry the matter out. There were different ideas advanced as to the kind of bank but a National Bank with a capital of \$50,000 found most favor.

17

CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION AT PHILADELPHIA

1876

On 10th May was the opening day of the exhibition and the city was prepared for it in one of the grandest displays of bunting ever shown. On Market and other streets the stores and many dwellings were literally covered with flags and streamers and all business was very generally suspended and almost everyone was out to attend the opening ceremonies at the Park.

The President of the United States with the Secretaries and the Governors of several states were present to lend additional interest to the occasion. A concourse of thousands of people filled the building and the place appropriated to the service of the occasion.

Our store closed at 11 a.m. and I went out to the grounds but could not get near to the stand where the services of the day took place and of course could not hear a word of the proceedings at the central point of the meeting. But from an elevated position near George's Hill I could see the vast crowd as it passed and surged around the main buildings and the avenues. James, Charles and the Girls came over and were on the grounds to see and mark the interesting occasion which would be an event in their lifetime.

Yearly Meeting this year was somewhat shadowed by the great centennial but was nevertheless very fully attended and possibly much more fully on that account as the attraction of the exhibition would readily add to the desires of Friends to see the vast display in almost every department of human productions of the loom and workshop as well as the natural products of the teeming earth from distant and near localities as were here presented.

On the 20th May I visited the exhibition having arranged to meet Emily and Lizzie Ashbridge in the main aisle of the building remaining until 5:30 and came over on the 6:30 train.

The display is grand and full of interest and is arranged in departments and the various nations having separate spaces allotted to their exhibits it is easier to examine with satisfaction by devoting such and such hours to each department. The exhibition is a vast study and here under a few roofs can be seen the best products of the skill and brain of every prominent nation of the earth. The new and modern nations of Europe here side by side with Turkey and Egypt, and South America exhibited in the ancient pottery of the Incas of Peru, and China and Japan add their treasures to the stock.

There is a vast space and yet every place seems occupied. Machinery hall with its constant hum of running machinery is attractive and full of interest to mechanics and every one having an

interest in the many varied kinds of modern machinery. The attendance is increasing every day and the success of the measure seems assured.

On the 13th June visited the exhibition and more particularly the Agricultural and Mechanical departments and these two departments have enough to require more than a full day to properly examine and investigate their exhibits. The visitors are increasing in numbers and in the vast crowds, one rarely meets an acquaintance, so many strangers are now visiting it. This visit was prolonged until a late hour, we called at T. B. Atkinson and came over at 10 p.m.

On the 15th June the Republican Convention at Cincinnati nominated Hayes of Ohio for President and Wheeler of N. Y. for Vice President. Hayes was formerly governor of Ohio and Wheeler is a representative at Washington. This nomination is well received.

On the 4th July of this year more than the usual display was made and the celebration partook of the nature of a pageant commencing the evening of the 3rd by procession ringing of bells and a grand military parade on the fourth with civil clubs, naval, social and other societies added to the crowd and the display of fireworks at Fairmount was a fitting termination to the day's revelries.

On the 8th July I visited the Exhibition with Emily and returned home

on the 9 p.m. train. The display is still vast and attractive and nothing like unto it has ever before been held in this or even any foreign country and the public is appreciating its rich extensive and unequalled presentation. Every department, and there are many of them, have great fullness and richness of display embracing the finest and best products in the several departments of the most skilled artisans in each branch of the special product of that art.

The 24th August was New Jersey day at the Exhibition. The Governor of the state was present and a large delegation from the state. The congregation at the New Jersey house on the grounds, the headquarters for visitors of that state was of course very crowded and here a register of names of the New Jersey visitors was taken. Emily, Fanny and myself were present from 1 to 9 p.m. The crowd this day was the largest up to this date.

On the 28th September which was Pennsylvania day exceeded all the rest in number of visitors reaching as high as 250,000 according to the reports at the entrances.

On the 27th October Governor Hayes of Ohio was at the exhibition and held a reception at the Ohio building. The visitors at the Exhibition continues to be large in numbers never less than 90,000 a day. The National Exhibition is to close on the 10th November - and it is expected to reopen again under the control of a company.

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HEADQUARTERS

SMITH-CADBURY MANSION
12 High Street
Moorestown, New Jersey 08057

From the
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANCIS T. ATKINSON
Book III 1868-1890

Through the courtesy of
FRANCIS W. ATKINSON
grandson of the writer

June 1, 1975

Typed by
Margaret Crispin

for the
Historical Society of Moorestown
Moorestown, New Jersey



305 West Main Street
Moorestown, New Jersey
1975

*the front porch
having been removed*

PREFACE

Francis Taylor Atkinson was my grandfather. His life span extended from 1820 to the "gay nineties." As a young business man in his early twenties he established the custom of daily entries in a journal of family activities and current events. Upon his death the custom was continued by his son, James H. Atkinson. Since 1939 responsibility for continuing daily entries has been that of the writer.

In 1880, Francis T. Atkinson in undertaking to prepare an autobiography based upon his recollections and the daily entries observed:

"Having passed the age of sixty years and when the retrospect in extent is far greater than the future can hold out prospect of a continued existence

in this world, I have thought it well to place in writing a short history of my own life, embodying the main events as they have occurred in order of time, and such observations therewith as I consider to be worthy of a passing notice, as I journey down the stream of life.

"The object will be to afford those who come after me some correct data by which they may learn something of what I have been and have seen and experienced on the journey. The purposes which actuated me, and some description of the persons and places which have been known to me at periods during my lifetime."

Born in Hamilton Village (now part of West Philadelphia) and reared by grandparents (Taylors) in Chester County, Pennsylvania, near West Chester, Francis T. Atkinson married Emily Hillman, daughter of a Trenton, New Jersey Quaker

family in 1851. Settling in Philadelphia within walking distance of his mercantile business, several moves of residence were made from 11th Street to Wister Street to 16th Street. The "store" was variously located in the vicinity of Market Street at 6th and 7th Streets.

As five children arrived over the years, the delights of country sojourns with New Jersey uncles, aunts, and cousins suggested the removal of family residence to a less urban situation.

It is to be hoped that the following excerpts from Francis T. Atkinson's autobiography will give the reader in "Bicentennial" times insights into the local way of life at the time of the country's "Centennial Celebration."

F. W. Atkinson

Medford, New Jersey
October 12, 1975

On the 3rd April Mother and I visited Moorestown, N. J. to look at a property for sale (305 W. Main Street) there of which we have some intention of purchasing. Having sold the 16th street property to John E. Fox on the 20th April a purchase was finally made of the Moorestown property and preparation made for occupation of it. On the 24th Bentley Worth came over and accompanied me to view the property and both of us were favorably impressed and on the 29th I consummated the purchase of it through Clayton Lippincott, agent of and for the owners Corlies.

On the 15th May we removed to Moorestown, N.J. and as this is a matter of some consequence I will now give a brief account of the preliminary action to it. Having for a long time an inclination to remove to the country, the selection of a place became a matter of importance and after several trips to an examination of localities in different sections of the surrounding districts of the city, the Moorestown property and locality seemed the best adapted to meet all requirements and suit us.

Fortunately a buyer for the 16th street property turned up in the person of John E. Fox who was pleased with the property and made a satisfactory offer

for it and the whole transaction of sale and purchase of both properties consummated in about twenty days.

The matter of moving occupied the most of a week and was attended with as little abrasion and wear of furniture as could be expected. Wagons had to be provided to take the goods out over the river and up the turnpike a distance of near twelve miles. I hired a man in the city with a furniture car and he with the assistance of Robt. Evan's son who came in with a wagon accomplished the work in a satisfactory manner.

The building which we are about to occupy is large with ample rooms high ceilings and the furniture and carpets readily adapted to the change. The space within the house was quite as great as the house on 16th street and the grounds and surroundings are ample for all purposes needed, enclosing an orchard, large chicken house and the lot extends to a street in rear called Second Street, containing three fourth of an acre.

This removal of course takes our interest in the city away and necessitates new associations and new interests and we are now transferred to the growing town of Moorestown an old village situated on an old road in an old settled portion of New Jersey and I shall now proceed to give a general description so that the future reader of this paragraph may at the time note the changes that

may have taken place since this was written.

Moorestown contains a population of about fifteen hundred persons and is situated on the turnpike leading from Camden to Mount Holly, a highway that was open before the time of the revolution and was first located in an almost east and west line from Mount Holly to Woodbury in Gloucester County. It was settled early probably among the earliest villages in the county and has today several houses much more than a hundred years old, constructed in a quaint old style, low ceilings, small windows and doors and altogether having the marks of a period when trade and traffic were limited to only the few wants which our early fathers had in the struggle with nature for a home and a livelihood. These buildings although old were still strong, the timbers showing no decay and will withstand winters storms and tempest.

A few of these buildings were situated just east of us on the same Main Street of the town and were constant reminders of the early periods of the settlement of the country.

The town extends about a mile in length along the old road now Main Street but have very little width - two streets to the north reaches to the railroad called Second and Third Streets, the next becomes the track of the railroad along which are several buildings. At the east end of Third Street is the Upper or East Moorestown Station.

Churches and schools are numerous as the population is generally intelligent and above the average usually found in suburban settlements.

The farmers are intelligent inquiring and thrifty and are numerous enough to give tone and character to the town, which being still under the government of the township officers and is returned as Chester Township to the court which sits at Mount Holly.

This township extends to the line of Camden County at the west branch of the Pensaucen Creek.

Mary S. Lippincott has established a boarding and day school here, which has been here for many years and enjoys a wide and excellent reputation but at present is not full, as she is in the decline of life and gives less attention to it than formerly and her daughters, assistants to her in the management of the school, do not share her interest in the efficient labors and as a result has gone back in its former prosperous condition.

The different Christian denominations are represented with church buildings. The Episcopal church at Main and Church Streets is a neat building and has a small congregation of the wealthier classes. The Baptist are numerous and have a large building further up on Main Street and the Methodist still further up an equally large building.

The Catholics have a church building on the south side on an elevated

position and are quite numerous in the town and the adjoining country. And both branches of Friends have meeting houses on adjoining lots at the east end with ample shedding as is the usual custom in country meetings and this location is considered to be near the central or most prominent part of the town.

A large public school building for the children is erected in a convenient locality for all, and a large canning establishment, conducted in the interest of Thurber & Co., of New York is operated in extensive buildings at the east end of the town.

The town being so extended on the Main Street as to produce considerable rivalry and the result of this early antagonism was the settlement of two stations the east and the west Moorestown stations situated about three-fourth of a mile distant from each other and this rivalry is still kept up and has been so rigid as to prevent the construction of a single station house equal to the importance of the place.

As the Society of Friends are most numerous here and large possessors of property, they impart a tone of their own to the community and good order and quietude generally prevail unless as it happens the town is disturbed by tramps or other outside visitors.

The town is situated upon an elevated ridge which very gradually slopes off

toward the northwest, the drainage on the upper side of the Main Street passing off in that direction and reaching the Delaware river near Riverton. The slope to the south and south west is drained into the east branch of the Pensaucen which flows along the valley south of the town and crosses the Haddonfield road about a mile south west of the town limits.

The two branches of the Pensaucen unite at what is called the Forks of the streams, Forks Landing and the united streams enter the Delaware just below Palmyra a small village on the railroad and near the river bank.

This ridge upon which the town is located is most apparent at the east end of the town and from there gives a wide and extensive view of the valley to the south across to the mount or low ridge which skirts the valley on that side terminating near Fellowship. This valley as you proceed west runs out and is crossed by the two branches of Pensaucen creek. Rising from the creeks are steep hills which after attaining a moderate height again slopes off into the plains and become level and sometimes low as the stream becomes sluggish. The tide ascends the stream to the crossing of the Camden road and the Pensaucen is navigable for small boats to the forks of the stream.

The town is not lighted except as private persons, citizens and property holders choose to place lamps out upon

the front of their dwellings, and this is usually done, particularly at the street crossing and each family depends upon its own well or cistern for water. Some cisterns have been placed at locations to supply in case the demand comes in event of fire and an engine is on hand to assist in such an emergency.

We are very much in the condition of a country cross road village where the town consists of a store, blacksmith shop, wheelwright shop, etc.

The railroad has enlivened some and since its construction has added materially to the growth of the town. Some portions of the town are not well supplied with water as the wells are required to be of much greater depth and the water very hard but fortunately our property has a plentiful water supply and of a superior quality.

Immediately adjoining the west end of the town are several nurseries owned by those who contribute to the business of the place for their transactions are extensive, shipping trees and plants to many distant points of the country. Perkins, Collins and DeCou share the business and their grounds are extensive. Perkins the nearest to the west end of the town has large and beautiful lines of trees along his front on the Haddonfield road which present a fine appearance approaching the town either by the railroad or the two roads leading out of it to the west and southwest.

The Haddonfield and the Camden roads converge at the West end and make what is called Main street and pass on through the town to Mount Holly and was the old stage road from that seat of Justice to Moorestown and on to the western end of the county.

Burlington County of which Moorestown is situated in the southwestern portion is one of the oldest counties of the state and earliest settled portion of the state and was for several decades one of the most productive agricultural counties of the union.

The soil of Moorestown is light but rich and very productive, all kinds of garden truck grow easily and abundantly. Strawberries are raised in quantities all around us. Fruit is abundant favorable season and the Mount Holly fair is always largely attended and supplied with the choicest specimens of the farm and orchard.

Having thus given a pretty full account of this village I will end by stating that it is 10 miles from Camden, 9 from Mount Holly and 7 from the Delaware River at Riverton, with good roads generally in all directions and excepting in midwinter when snow or rains have softened the soil, the travel is easy and pleasant as the hills and rough places are few.

The prominent families of the town are the Lippincotts, the Collins, the Roberts, the Buzbys, the Haines, the

Stokes and the Doughtons, all of whom are property holders and descended from families of many years residence and among the earliest settlers of this part of the country.

After getting fixed in our new residence, the neighbors called upon us, Robert Evans and wife, being known to us long before are among the first to call, Wm. Collins and wife, Israel Heulings and wife, and our close neighbor Thomas Wilson on the one side and Jacob Haines on the other side are early to call and we find them all to be kind, sociable and ready to afford us any neighborly assistance we may need at any time.

On the 6th June we received some chickens from S. Roberts who have a good breed at their residence near Tioga station and offer to start us with the right kind, and as there is a fine large chicken house on the property, we have entered into the poultry business.

On the 20th June with James took a walk to the Coles church on the Haddonfield road about four miles distant and here is an Episcopal church within the grounds of the cemetery which is one of the oldest in the state having an existence before the era of the revolution and some of my wife's forefathers and mothers are buried here, the surrounding country is well cultivated and the buildings good with pleasant approaches and shaded yards and graded roadways.

This season here is a good one for