

SWACKHAMER-DUFFORD GENEALOGY SOCIETY



FOR THE DESCENDANTS OF SAMUEL SWACKHAMER (SCHWACHHAMMER), WHO IN 1732 SETTLED IN LONG VALLEY, NEW JERSEY, AND PHILLIP DUFFORD (DUFORD), WHO SETTLED THERE IN 1738.

SUMMER 2023 BULLETIN

Dear Members and Friends:

Foregoing the traditional reunion gathering on the last Saturday of July feels strange to me, but it will give us time to re-examine cost and benefits and explore other options that recognize the changes in Society membership, residential locations, and member interests. One of the interesting changes is that members are no longer searching for our European roots but are expressing more interest in family history.

This issue of the Bulletin features a story taken from an old, recorded interview of Harriet Skellenger Swackhamer Clark, who lived from 1864-1955. It was transcribed by Pastor Larry Brasher, former President of the S-D Society and her great-grandson.

It could easily have been any one of our ancestors telling us in their own words who they were, what mattered to them, and where and how they were living. Some call it the “dash of life,” that period of time between the tombstone date of birth and date of death.

Larry has demonstrated one way of making history more family accessible even as recording technology has changed. In past Bulletins we have shown ways to expand the captions of old photos to make the album a more complete picture of events. War correspondence with a loved one or long-distance dating often show the personality of an ancestor.

Have you tried to share family history? A shoebox of photos and letters is a start but passing it on to the next generation probably marks its end. How long can one look at a photo of unknown relatives and wonder why it was kept for 50 or more years?

In 2024 we will return to the more traditional Bulletin content and on Saturday, July 27, 2024, will hold a meeting in Long Valley, NJ. Will you make an effort to attend the 2024 gathering in Long Valley?

Sincerely,

Gene L. Swackhamer, President

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Current and past *Bulletins* are located here. Put your comments or questions in the "Guest Book." The site is monitored, and you will get a response. Throughout this issue (D) represents a Dufford connection, (S) for Swackhamer, (S & D) both families, and (F) for friend of the Society.

CORONATION CONNECTIONS

John Lawrence Brasher

She was born on a farm in Ironia, New Jersey, when Abraham Lincoln was president. In 1876, she took a train with her parents and marveled at the wonders of the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. She was fond of Queen Victoria and already middle-aged when Victoria died, so in June 1953, she came to our house to see the live broadcast of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on the television that my parents had recently purchased. I watched the coronation of Queen Elizabeth with my great-grandmother Harriet "Hattie" Skellenger Swackhamer Clark (1864-1955).

She was the first child of Juliet Jordan Skellenger Swackhamer (1838-1906) and Samuel Swackhamer (1841-1904). Samuel, a prosperous farmer, was also a wool dealer and auctioneer. He owned a second home on a lake in nearby Flanders. He was an entrepreneur, always with an eye for what was special or unusual. The elderly Miss Margaret Howell of Chester (1876-1965) told a story that when Samuel was a boy and saw her grandfather Howell's kitchen, Samuel exclaimed, "Holy golly cripes, what a big stove!" As an adult, Samuel made and enjoyed his own beer, a German custom. My grandfather liked to tease my grandmother Bessie about her grandfather Swackhamer's love of beer. Bessie was a staunch member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Samuel and his family attended the Flanders Methodist Church.

Hattie Swackhamer married Lewis Clark of Morristown in 1884. He was a stone mason who built fancy walls for the rich, including Thomas Nast, on Macculloch Avenue. He later became mayor of Morris Township. In his seventies, he died while visiting his sister- and brother-in-law, Cebelia Swackhamer Tiger and William Tiger, in Peapack. When leaving, he mistakenly opened the wrong door, and instead of stepping onto a back porch, he lurched into the abyss of cellar stairs, fatally fracturing his skull.

Before marrying, Lewis made a betrothal gift for Hattie—a beautiful butternut and walnut wooden box with inlaid hearts on top and a traditional fylfot design on the front. The fylfot, resembling spinning paisley-shaped rain drops, was for centuries a popular Palatine German folk art symbol signifying crop abundance, good luck, and resurrection. He may have seen the design on the Swackhamer farm while courting Hattie.



The betrothal box made by Lewis Clark for Harriet Swackhamer, with traditional fylfot design.

Hattie and Lewis had four children—Bessie, Raymond, Elwood, and Roland—each spaced almost exactly five years apart. They built a house on the northwest corner of Locust and Center avenues in Morristown, where Hattie loved her flower garden and was especially proud of her tree peony near the back door. She was a splendid cook. She made pies from her backyard Baldwin apple tree and canned sweet black cherries from her Ox Heart cherry tree, a tree so large that her unobserved grandchildren raided its cherries by climbing onto the second-story roof. Family and neighbors looked forward every week to her famous deep-fried crullers, also a traditional German treat.

She was lively and fun filled. Her children and grandchildren gathered every Sunday at her dinner table. She never took the Lord's name in vain, but if something went wrong in the kitchen, she used colorful language. She always attended funerals, and her family kidded her because she seemed to enjoy them, taking account of all the mourners and afterward reporting to her family who all was there. My mother once passed by a bedroom mirror with her grandmother Hattie when Hattie was in her eighties. Hattie shouted at her own reflection in an annoyed voice, "Who's that old woman in the mirror?!" She died peacefully in bed at age 90 with her 1884 framed marriage certificate hanging on the wall above her head. On it was an engraving titled "The Voyage of Life."

At Christmas 1949 in our home in Denville, my father, Julius Brasher, interviewed Hattie with a tape-recorder. Following is a transcript:

JB: You were born between Chester and Hackettstown, near Chester, Pleasant Hill. Were you married at the house or at the church?

HC: At the HOUSE.

JB: I bet you don't remember the minister's name who married you.

HC: Yes, I do. I remember it well, but I can't think of it now. What was his name? Well, it don't matter.

JB: Well, anyway, you were well-married.

HC: Oh, yes, we were well-married.

JB: And how many children did you have?

HC: Four.

JB: Are you a member of any organizations? Eastern Star? Like that?

HC: Nothing like that. Only the WSCS at church. Used to be called the Women's Missionary Society. Well, sometimes 'twas Ladies Aid. I guess there was two or THREE societies. FOUR of them—Ladies

Aid, and Missionary Society, and, oh, there was a couple of OTHERS. They used to have the all-day meetings, you know, and there was four different ones— first one after another. Two in the morning and two in the afternoon. A whole day of it. Tiresome. [laughs]

JB: How long have you been a member of the church, Grandma?

HC: Well, ever since I've been MARRIED. I joined soon as I come to town [Morristown].

JB: So, you've been a member of the Morristown Methodist Church all those years. Since 1884. Do you go to church often?

HC: I DO. I always go. I always HAVE. Whenever I COULD.

JB: When your husband was living you hardly ever missed a service.

HC: Very seldom. When the children was little and I couldn't go, HE'D go, and just as soon as they got big enough to leave, I'D go and he'd stay HOME. We went to Sunday school, and the children went with us. I can see those FOUR KIDS goin' down Western Avenue, and wasn't I PROUD of 'em?

JB: They walked.

HC: SURE. I believe in taking the children to church. I believe in that right NOW.

JB: Was the church built there before you came?

HC: Oh, yes, yes. A mighty long while. I don't remember when it was built. I guess the date's ON it somewhere. Lewis was on the Official Board and a Trustee.

JB: How long was he mayor of the Morris Township?

HC: Thirty or thirty-five years. Oh, yes, 'twas a long, long time, because one of the committeemen died, right away after we were married, and they appointed him right away. [laughs]

JB: What's your favorite hymn? Do you have a favorite hymn?

HC: Well, I don't know. "This Is a Beautiful World." Is that the way it goes? "This is My Father's World." Yes, I like that. I think it has prit' near everything in it.

JB: You like the garden, I guess that's one reason. You've done quite a lot of gardening, haven't you?

HC: Oh, yes, yes, I've always had gardens. [laughs]

JB: Now, when Elwood was a little boy, did you ever whip him?

HC: I don't REMEMBER that I ever did. I spose I WANTED to lots of times. Knock him over the head with a STICK or something. [laughs] Do you remember, Elwood?

JB: How about that Elwood, did she ever whip you?

Elwood Clark: Well, SOMEBODY did 'cause there was always a SWITCH, up on the rack in the kitchen that held the PAPERS. Don't you remember? There was ALWAYS a little switch there to remind us of it.

HC: I CAN remember times when, oh, I would give ANYTHING if there never had BEEN such a time. When I GOT provoked with the boys, you know. I THINK of them every once in a while, and I DO HOPE the boys don't REMEMBER.

JB: Do you believe we ought to spank children if they're naughty?

HC: I DO. I think if a child is NAUGHTY, it should be MADE to mind, should be PUNISHED, so they REMEMBER it. You remember when I whipped you, Elwood?

Elwood Clark: No.

HC: Well, then it didn't do you any good, did it?

Elwood Clark: Probably it did a LOT of good.

HC: It DID, at the time.

JB: Well, tell me about the big snow of 1888.

HC: Well, shall I tell you all about it?

JB: Yes, tell us a lot about that snow.

HC: Well, we had a lot of NICE NEIGHBORS. Lot's of 'em. And here was this SNOW on the ground. Lots of snow, DEEP. And we said, "Let's get up a SLEIGH-RIDE and go up to Grandpa Swackhamer's. And we DID. We had a four-horse sled-oh, no, that wasn't the time of the blizzard. Of course not. [laughs]

JB: Well, tell us about that. Go ahead.

HC: Well, my husband's brother, George, and Lewis, you know, always had to go FISHING in the wintertime on the ice. My father could stand up on that ice better than those boys could. They was a-goin' fishin'. And the rest of us was goin' on the sleigh-ride just to have a party up to Grandpa Swackhamer's. We had this four-horse sled and a TWO-HORSE, TWO-SEATED SLEIGH. The crowd did. In a certain place, I couldn't tell you—I could tell you just where it 'tis, but you wouldn't KNOW. You went down in a little holler, and then come up the other side. And goin' up that upper hill, the four horses BALKED. They wouldn't go up the hill. And EVERYBODY in that big sled had to get out in the SNOW. [laughs] Well when we got to Grandpa Swackhamer's, THEY were SOAKIN' WET, because they had been in the snow. And the people had gone to bed and there was no FIRE. [laughs] You know, they had self-burner stoves; it might have been one. And the boys built a fire, dried themselves off, and nobody went home 'til the next day, when it got DAYLIGHT. Then the four-horse load went home. And George and Lewis and myself, we stayed, and Florence [Hattie's sister] went home with me on the train. And the train was stuck right here at Denville. We stood there ever so long, didn't know why, you know, it was 'cause the train couldn't get through. Well George and Lewis, they stayed up there to go FISHIN'. And they stayed about THREE DAYS, and then they walked the fence to Kenville, got the train to come home. That's the way they went fishin'.

But the time of the BLIZZARD, we got up Monday morning, Lewis and Dennis Murphy always went to work together. We got up Monday morning and it was snowin' to beat the band, and Lewis says, "Well, I'M not goin' out to work today." And pretty soon Dennis come to the door. Lewis told him to go home and stay there, we wouldn't go to work. So, he went home. Well, we had to shove the KITCHEN TABLE against the BACK DOOR to keep it SHUT. And YOU know where the Saunders lived--caty-corners from us--PART OF THE DAY we couldn't see that house AT ALL. Lewis, he read to me all day. Bessie rocked in her little rocking chair, and Lewis read to me out loud. And t'was a man lived upstairs, and t'was about four o'clock, I guess, when he got home. And he said he'd never got there if it hadn't been for another man who was close by. And the people, some of 'em started on the train for New York, I forget where they got, far as Madison, maybe, and then they had to get off, and they walked across the fields, managed to live and get back home again.

JB: Did they have electric trains then?

HC: NO. And when Lewis went DOWNTOWN, a day or two after, when it cleared off, and he went downtown, he walked the bank all down Western Avenue, all the way down into town, just walked right on top of the bank. [laughs] And people had to come out on their porch roofs on Western Avenue to get out of their houses.

JB: Well, now how about that snowstorm we had a few years ago, how would that compare with it, you think?



Five generations of Swackhamers, August 4, 1914, Pleasant Hill, near Chester. Standing: center, Harriet Swackhamer Clark; left, Harriet's paternal aunt, Alice Swackhamer Tharp; right, Harriet's daughter, Bessie Clark Watters. Seated: Elizabeth Hopkins Swackhamer, 95 years old, Harriet Swackhamer Clark's grandmother (who was born when King George III was alive!) holding her great-great granddaughter (daughter of Bessie and the author's mother) Lois Watters, who lived to almost 99.

HC: Aw, that was just a little squall. [laughs] Oh, the WIND blew, so, you know.

JB: Do you remember what Grandpa read to you when you were in the kitchen?

HC: "Seven Oaks." You know anything about it?

JB: That's one of Hawthorn's stories, isn't it?

HC: Well, that was the story he read all day.

JB: Oh, "The House of Seven Gables," that's one of Hawthorn's.

HC: "The House of Seven Gables," that's one of Dickens' isn't it? Well, somebody's.

JB: Was Grandpa a good reader?

HC: Yes, he was.

JB: Did you ever read to him?

HC: I don't think so.

JB: Well, Lois tells me that Grandpa was a very neat person, always combed his hair very neatly.

HC: Oh, yes. [laughs] He had a sister Mary, you know, and she was always making fun of him. Fear he'd get one hair too far to one side. Well, he worked at mason work, you know, in the lime and sand, what they used in those days, and dipped his hands in water during the day different times. And sometimes when he'd come home his hands would be all covered with that gritty stuff, you know. He had a bottle of oil, I don't know what it was, and the first thing he'd do would be to pour a lot in his hands, grease them all over good, you know, and take a cloth, wipe 'em off, and then wash his hands. And they were nicer and softer than mine. They didn't get rough because they'd been in the sand. All these old times come up, you know, every once in a while, and you think of 'em.

JB: Well, they're very important. If it wasn't for old times like that, we wouldn't have times like we have now. None of us'd be here.

HC: What was Dr. Lambdin's sermon last week? [Henry Lyle Lambdin] Oh, "Wise Men Never Look Back." But he said if it HADN'T BEEN for these OLD generations, lots of 'em, you know, nobody would have had any EDUCATION or wouldn't have KNOWN so very much about different things. But now the wise men all look ahead. That was his sermon on Sunday.

JB: He's a fine preacher, isn't he?

HC: Oh, he CERTAINLY IS. He's GRAND. And I try to LISTEN to him and TAKE EVERYTHING IN, and when I get HOME sometimes, LATELY, late years, I mean, I can't remember a THING he said. But I go to BED, and then I can think of a WHOLE LOT OF THINGS while I'm in bed.

JB: You do your best thinking in bed.

HC: I DO, all the time. [laughs] I don't know why 'tis.

JB: Do you stay awake at night quite a lot, Grandma?

HC: As long as there's anything DOIN'. If I hear any racket, why, I'm AWAKE. But, if I know just exactly what it 'tis, when I hear Bessie comin' upstairs to go to bed, I can go to sleep right away. And over home, if I heard Roland COME IN, heard some racket, and I knew it was HIM, I'd sleep right along, you know. But any particular racket's goin' on, then I don't go to sleep.



July 4, 1952, picnic in Morristown. Harriet Swackhamer Clark seated center, with the author standing next to her on the right, with all of her great-grandchildren.

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