



UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Memorial to the Caldwells

Standing tall above the many gravestones at the historic First Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Elizabeth is a stone obelisk dedicated to James and Hannah Caldwell and their selfless contributions to our fledgling country. The monument, erected in 1845, celebrates the memory of the Reverend James Caldwell, ordained pastor of the Presbyterian Church, revolutionary leader, Quartermaster General and Chaplain to the New Jersey Brigade, who was shot and killed in Elizabethtown in 1781.

Caldwell, known for his fiery, passionate sermons was so influential that dozens of his parishioners joined the cause for freedom, including 40 as commissioned officers. After multiple British attacks he often preached with loaded pistols on the pulpit. By 1777 his reputation and contributions to the cause were so widely known that Congress awarded him \$200 for "his extraordinary services."

In fact, the British were so concerned with "the Fighting

Parson's" influence that they put a price on his head.

The monument equally honors Hannah Ogden Caldwell, Caldwell's wife and mother of their 9 children, who was shot and killed in her home in present day Union in the aftermath of the Battle of Connecticut Farms in 1780. It was Hannah Caldwell's shocking murder by a British soldier while holding her youngest child in her arms that roused, rallied and energized the struggling patriot cause. They not only held Mrs. Caldwell in high esteem; they were appalled that a civilian and a mother would be killed and her body treated so disgracefully by being thrown outside the house into the road. Her tragic death is memorialized in the official seal of Union County.

News of Mrs. Caldwell's murder quickly spread far and wide. Two weeks later, at the last northern major revolutionary battle at Springfield, the patriot troops routed the British advance and sent them back to New York. At the height of the fighting, the soldiers ran out



of wadding for their muskets. Caldwell ran into the nearby church where supplies were housed to fetch Watt's hymnals. Tearing out the pages, he urged the men to use the crumpled pages as wadding. "Give 'em Watts, boys," he shouted.

The sandstone obelisk proudly stands as a monument to the Caldwells dedication and commitment to the American cause, for which they both made the ultimate sacrifice. Although weathered and worn each of the four sides of the base recognizes the Caldwells' contributions. Originally initiated by the New Jersey Society of Cincinnati and Presbyterian Church, efforts currently are underway to restore the monument in time for the upcoming celebration of the 250th anniversary of our country.

Celebrate Women's History with UCHS

John Prescott, the History Program Coordinator for the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs and a UCHS Member of the Board of Trustees, will present a program on Celebrating Union County Women's History on Sunday, March 6th in commemoration of Women's History Month.

"Union County is fortunate to have a rich and diverse history of eminent women leaders predating the American Revolution," Society President Joanne Rajoppi said. "We look forward to sharing this wonderful heritage with our members and friends."

The UCHS meeting and program will begin at 2 pm at the Hanson House which is located at 38 Springfield Avenue in Cranford. All are welcome and refreshments will be served.

Save the Dates:

March 6: Regular UCHS Meeting, Hanson House

April 6: Introduction to Oral History Workshop, TBA

April 10: UCHS Luncheon, Garden Restaurant

Thoughts About the Last 100 Years by Bill Frolich Continued

For baked goods, everybody went to Brownfield's Bakery, and I mean everybody. On any Saturday morning Morris Avenue was almost impassible, with cars double-parked on both sides of the street. You could tell by the license plates the variety of counties from which the drivers had come, and there were many. Upon entering the store a customer had to pick up a numbered card to show his position in the waiting line. However, the quality of the baked goods was worth the wait in line, and very little was left un-eaten after breakfast on Sunday morning.

In those days you could make your own Root Beer, and we did. All year long we would collect empty soda pop bottles, and by May we were ready to use them. We needed a large bowl, about a pound of sugar, some water, and a bottle of Hire's Root Beer Extract. After a thorough mixing this liquid was used to fill our collection of bottles, plugged with corks, and set aside to age. About two weeks later, the first cork was blown out, indicating that our home-made root beer was ready for drinking. Its taste was worth the two-week wait. Saturday is saved for better things to do. Supermarkets now sell almost everything once sold only in individual small shops, and specialty shops are now found in the big malls. Can you still buy root beer extract?

. Some of us had telephones, but not everyone had one, and they were sometimes called "candlestick phones" because of the tall handle with the mouthpiece at the top. The receiver was separate and, if

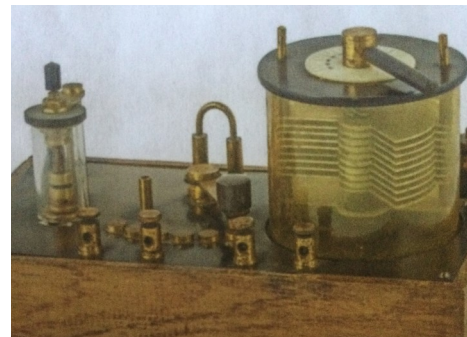


not in use, hung on a hook attached to the handle. There were no dials, and to use the phone you simply lifted the receiver to your ear and asked the operator to get you Aunt Sophie. The switchboard operator knew her number and plugged in the connection. If you received an annoying phone call it was an easy matter to hold the receiver to the mouthpiece and the resulting ear-piercing feed-back screech was enough to discourage the un-wanted caller.

Some of us had radios, but they were basic instruments with mysterious dials and ear-phones but no speakers. They came later. The necessary antenna was a long wire stretching from the set to a pole somewhere in the backyard. It was also possible to make your own radio receiver, known as a "crystal set", using a few coils



of wire a stone-like crystal, and ear phones. A pointed wire, called a cat's whisker, was adjusted to the crystal until a signal was heard in the ear phones. Very basic, but it worked, and was fun.



OVER THE BACK FENCE

When are we going to bring back that ear-piercing feed-back screech that was enough to discourage the un-wanted caller.