



UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



August Meeting

In spite of the COVID19, the Executive Board managed to meet on August 16 in the Hanson House, with the members observing proper precautions. They all wore masks and sat at least six feet apart from each other.

Various topics were discussed, including the dates for next year's meetings, but it is questionable as to whether those dates will stand. We have already lost several dates for this year.

We did make plans for something different for our October 4, 2020 meeting, but later those plans were changed. The "virtual program" was discarded and instead we found ourselves under a large tent at Liberty Hall in Union, NJ. We were limited to forty people, wearing masks and keeping the customary social distance of six feet apart. However, the subject of the program was still about "A Ghostly Apparition at Liberty Hall" which concerns the ghost of Hannah Caldwell



who was killed by a British soldier June 7, 1780 during the Battle of Connecticut Farms. Her ghost was reportedly seen by British looters as they invaded Liberty Hall, and were scared off by what they saw in the house.

It is interesting to wonder why Hannah's ghost would have been in Liberty Hall as she was killed in her own home of the Presbyterian Church parsonage, about a mile away.

In recent years Hannah was reported to haunt the Union County Court House, but that makes some sense as she is buried in the next door churchyard.

Season's Greetings

With the holiday season fast approaching, how many of us are reminded of those days when they were young children and on their good behavior, lest Santa might leave only a lump of coal in their stockings?

There are other pleasant thoughts to remember, such as the visits to the department stores, and their wondrous display of toys. Levy Brothers on Broad Street in Elizabeth had quite a toy department in the rear of the fourth floor that included a hobby section where you could buy parts for building model airplanes and ships.

There were three 10 cent stores along Broad Street with a large variety of interesting small toys, but none could compare with Bamberger's toy department in Newark. It was always worth the trip to Newark to wander through that dreamland of toys, dolls, and electric trains.

Finally it was Christmas Eve, and the longest night of all. You went to bed early, with hopes that Santa Claus

would really come and bring a decorated tree and a lot of presents, although how he could get everything down that chimney was a mystery.



Yet somehow he did, and on Christmas Morning there was the tree and the presents and no coal in the stockings.

They had not been there the night before, but Santa was indeed magic..

Winter Sports

Now that Halloween is over, and all the friendly witches, skeletons, ghosts, and hobgoblins have retired for a year, we can start to think of all the fun we used to have in the cold winters. There was ice-skating on the thickly frozen lakes and rivers, and a substantial snow-fall gave us the material for hours of fun.

We made good use of our Flexible *Flyer* sleds on any snow-covered hill, and some of us even tried skiing on

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Pictured above is one of the fifteen million Model T cars built by the Ford Motor Car Company. This one was built about 1916. When Ford set up an assembly line to mass produce autos he called the first one Model A, and any significant change became a Model B, or a C, or a D or other following letters of the alphabet until Model T was built. Radical changes to the next model caused Ford to start over with a new line of Model A's in 1928.

The Model T had some interesting features about it. Its transmission was of a planetary type, consisting of bands and drums, controlled by three foot pedals in the floor. In some models one of these pedals also brought the car to a stop by means of the drive-shaft. Other models had brake shoes and drums on the two rear wheels.

Because there was no electric starting motor, it was necessary to use the hand crank. After making a few adjustments to the choke and spark levers on the steering column, a driver could usually start the engine with the hand crank, but holding it too firmly could be dangerous. If the engine kicked backward, the result might be a broken arm.

Carrying spare tires was a necessary part of traveling, as many roads were un-paved and un-cleaned, and blow-outs

to the tires were all too

common. All drivers carried their jacks and wrenches in a tool compartment, usually under the front seat. A hand pump was also included.

It was possible to repair a punctured tire on the road. It was necessary to force one side of the tire off the rim by using "tire irons" and then pull out the inner tube and patch its puncture. After re-assembling everything the pump was used to re-inflate the tire.

Some late model cars had split rims, but it was difficult to withdraw the inner tube without the proper equipment, like a split-rim compressor, but it could be done. Many drivers always carried two or more spare tires, inflated and ready to be mounted in place of the flat tire, thus eliminating the need to repair the blow-out on the road.

Unfortunately, there were times when two spare tires were not enough.

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those same hills.

Building a snowman was easy, and we sometimes provided him with an entire snow family and even an igloo.

Does anyone remember the toboggan chutes that the County used to set up on the Galloping Hill Golf Course? This was back around the

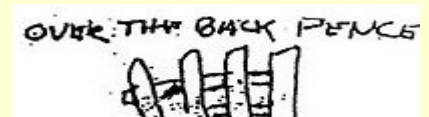
snowy winter of 1940/41 when launching platforms and wooden chutes were set up on the hill near the clubhouse. You could bring your own or rent a toboggan for fifty cents an hour, but use of the chutes was free.

With the sled flat on the launching pad, a couple of men made sure that the four passengers were properly seated with all arms and legs safely tucked in. Then the pad was tilted and you were off on a mile-a-minute slide down the chute and out onto the icy, snow covered hill. It was fun, but a long walk back to the starting point, dragging the toboggan behind you.

Then you got back in line for another exciting ride down the chutes and hill.

These two chutes gave you the best rides, but if you did not want to wait in line, there were four other chutes on the other side of the hill that you could use. These were just wooden chutes resting on the ground without any launching platforms or assistants. You just loaded the riders and pushed yourself off.

There was another source of pleasure a considerable distance away from the other attractions and this was for the benefit of any skiers. A long pulley-line was stretched between two trees and powered by a gasoline engine that kept it in motion. A skier could grasp the constantly moving rope and be pulled up to the top of the hill, ready for another down-hill run.



Picking grapes off the old grape-vine for juice to bottle sometimes got us in a jam with the cook.