



MANTUA TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL COMMISSION QUARTERLY BULLETIN

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The Story of Twin Sisters



Barnsboro School



Sewell School

The Story of Twin Sisters

By Jeff Gellenthin and Herb Hood

Almost 250 years ago, two military fortifications were built on the Delaware River to defend Philadelphia from British naval forces advancing up the river towards Philadelphia. These fortifications, sisters, but not twin sisters, if you will, were Fort Mercer on the New Jersey side of the river and Fort Mifflin on the Pennsylvania side of the river. Today, Fort Mifflin still stands in its approximate War of 1812 configuration. Mother nature and the passage of time has not been kind to Fort Mercer. Nevertheless, what remains of Fort Mercer continues to yield important information through discoveries and archeological digs. Today the fortifications, sister forts, stand as monuments to our nation's past. Their stories form an important chapter in the history of America.

One hundred and ten years ago, another set of sisters was constructed in Mantua Township. They also have a significant importance in the history of Mantua Township. They were not only sisters, but twins. They were built with fortification-like strength. Both still stand today, and both still serve their purposes, in one way or another, of educating the children of Mantua Township. They have weathered all that mother nature has thrown at them. With walls as thick as the armor plating on a battleship, they served as fallout shelters during the cold war in case the unthinkable ever happened. From the halls and rooms of these two twin sister buildings have come local military soldiers, some of whom have given their lives for our country just as the defenders of Forts Mercer and Mifflin did. Others were prominent professional individuals in our community and important business leaders who have left their permanent mark in Mantua Township history. The family names of Kirkbride, Ledden, Gurk, Miller, Heritage, Chew, Tomlin, and others figure prominently amongst those who have walked the halls and rooms of these twin buildings. The twin buildings are the Barnsboro and Sewell Schools, both built in 1913. They are amongst the oldest

school structures still in existence in Gloucester County that are still serving as educational facilities. Today, when students, teachers and administrators walk the halls and occupy the rooms in the twin schools they are there in not only just an old school, but a monument of Mantua Township's rich history. Few communities in the United States can make that claim, if any. Just viewing these schools for people who have knowledge of their past, can spark the historical memories and stories of Mantua Township's ability to provide education. The roots of the stories behind these two educational monuments go well into the past. The Sewell and Barnsboro schools truly have a fascinating history which deserves to be told and not ever forgotten. Here is their story.

Mantua Township came into existence in 1853. Prior to that it was a part of Greenwich Township. The parents of school age children who wanted to send their children to school had to send them to Carpenter's Landing, now known as Mantua since November 19, 1866.

"The first school-house in Mantua District was built by Benjamin Allen on his farm, one mile southwest of Carpenter's Bridge. It was a plain, one story, frame building. Sometime about the year 1800 the house ceased to be used for school purposes and was rented to a colored man by the name of Tony Hugg." From Cushing and Sheppard's History Book, published in 1876, page 159.

In 1804, a man by the name of Martin Turner donated a tract of land for the purpose of building a schoolhouse and graveyard in Mantua. Upon that tract of land, a schoolhouse was indeed built. The school house was constructed using red brick and one story high. It was 34 feet by 48 feet. The school most likely had two doors and 12 windows. In 1874, the 1804 schoolhouse was taken down and a new schoolhouse was built and named the Mantua Academy which is the current home of the Mantua Township Historical Commission Museum and The Delores Allen Memorial Library and Research Area.

In the 1930's, the Mantua Academy was replaced by the Mantua School, renamed J. Mason Tomlin Elementary School.

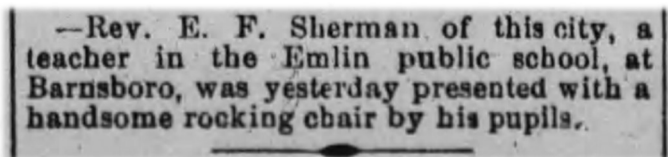
Even with the construction of the 1804 schoolhouse, it was still quite a distance for school age children living in Barnsboro and the present-day Sewell area to travel. Roads in 1804 were not very good. Barnsboro needed a schoolhouse.

A man by the name of George Emlin was born in Pennsylvania on May 7, 1695. He died in Philadelphia on October 24, 1754. He was a man of considerable wealth as he was a brewmaster. He purchased land in the Barnsboro area amongst other locations. His wife's name was Mary Heath. George and Mary had a son named George who was born in Philadelphia on June 21, 1718.

Upon the death of George, the father, George, the son, inherited his father's land holdings. From the Mantua Township Bicentennial Book on page 49 it states:

"The first schoolhouse in Barnsboro was the Emlin School located about one mile from Main Street on the Richwood Road. It stood next to the Mt. Zion Methodist Protestant Church. Its history dates back to 1754" (same date as the death of George Emlin from above), "and the will of George Emlin, a brewmaster of Old Philadelphia. Emlin left all of his land to his son, George and his heirs and assigns forever. Barnsboro acquired the site of four acres before the 1850's, but no deed has been found to this day."

Based on newspaper articles, the schoolteachers in these early schools were well liked.



-Rev. E. F. Sherman of this city, a teacher in the Emlin public school, at Barnsboro, was yesterday presented with a handsome rocking chair by his pupils.

The preceding from The Camden City Telegram

Thursday, January 3, 1895



Emlin School, also known as the Mount Zion School



MT. Zion Church with the MT. Zion/Emlin School to the right

The schools of Mantua Township were integrated long before the Supreme Court Decision of Brown vs Brown in 1954 and long before President Dwight D. Eisenhower used the military to enforce that decision in the late 1950's. In fact, the students at the Mantua Academy School on the corner of Norris and Mantua Boulevard in Mantua were being served hot lunches for just 5 cents per day. The menu was good, as it featured a meat dish, mashed potatoes, and stewed tomatoes, for example. The parents of the students were the ones who made this happen.

Following is a class picture from the Emlin School taken about 1910. Take note of the comment about the teacher, Mr. Kandle, who lived in Woodbury, rode the train to Sewell, got off the train and walked from Sewell into Barnsboro and then from Barnsboro he traveled down Richwood Road, and this with one leg a bit shorter than the other. This was a dedicated man.

Also, take note of some of the prominent area family names in the picture such as Daminger, Jenkins and Haines.

To borrow from the world of baseball, teachers like Mr. Kandle and Rev. Sherman were the Babe Ruth's in the teaching world in the Barnsboro area of their time and what's more, they plied their trade in old wooden schools like the early baseball players did in old wooden ball parks of decades ago.



MOUNT ZION SCHOOL --- ABOUT 1910 --- 4x6 1/2

TOP ROW - L to R -

1- JOE CAMP 2- OSCAR JENKINS 3- WALTER WHITE 4- BILL DATZ
5- CARL JONES 6- JOHN JONES

MIDDLE ROW - L to R -

1- GEORGE HAINES 2- NORMA MILLER 3- OSCAR DAMINGER
4- MR. HENRY BELL KANDLE 5- IDELLA HAINES 6- LUCY DAMINGER
7- HOWARD WHITE

BOTTOM ROW - L to R -

1- PAUL DATZ 2- CARRIE KERSH 3- MARGARET DATZ
4- CARRIE DAMINGER 5- HELEN DAMINGER 6- DAVE WARLOW
7- PAUL JONES

MR. KANDLE LIVED IN WOODSBURY. HE RODE THE TRAIN TO SEWELL AND WALKED TO MT. ZION AND BACK EVERY DAY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE HAD TO WEAR ONE SHOE WITH A BUILT UP SOLE ABOUT 3 INCHES THICK.

The Bicentennial Book goes on to say, "Designated as District No. 11 and later District No. 4, Emlin School was a one-room wooden building with windows on three sides. At the back of the building stood a raised platform where the teacher's desk stood. There were about 40 desks for the children and grades first through eight were taught by one teacher. A small iron pump stood in the front yard. Both the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Protestant Churches used the schoolhouse for their services before their churches were built. About the early part of the 1920's, the Emlin

School was discontinued. It was used for many years as a storage room for the township until around 1972 when it sold to a Mr. H. Brian Jaggard. He told us that he wanted to save this old school-house and even offered it to "Smithville" but it seems that they were not interested. So, it was finally torn down. Some of the timber was saved by Mr. Jaggard and used in building an additional room on to his own home that is just down the road."

The first school to actually be built in the village of Barnsboro was built in 1851. It was called the Barnsboro Academy. It was built on a 160 foot by 200-foot lot. It was built of wood and had two school rooms. The school became Public School No. 12. It was built in the front of the present Barnsboro School. The school had two rooms and grades one thru eight were taught there. One teacher taught grades 1 thru 5 while a second teacher taught grades 6 thru 8. When the present schoolhouse in Barnsboro was built in 1913, the old schoolhouse was torn down.



In the preceding picture you will see a building with a belfry and a bell in it. This was the Barnsboro Academy. The school is in the background. In the foreground is the tollhouse and tollgate.



Barnsboro Academy

The bell in the school belfry once resided in the Emlin School. While neither the Emlin School or the Barnsboro Academy still exist today, the bell has survived the passage of time and now rests in the Mantua Fire and EMS Museum on Main Street in Mantua. It is the oldest surviving bell from Mantua Township's past.



Emlin and Barnsboro Academy Bell, 1873

The first schoolhouse in Sewell was the Knight's Run School, opened in 1870. The school was built on a triangle shaped piece of land about where the Heritage's Dairy Store now sits. It got its name from the small stream nearby called Knight's Run. It was a one room schoolhouse where one teacher taught grades 1 thru 8. There were 56 desks in the school. The school was designated as School District No. 10 and later as School District No. 3. The school was heated by a pot belly stove. Coal for the stove was stored outside of the school and boys would bring buckets of coal inside. Sewell, at this time, was a huge farming area and some of the students rode horses to school. There were sheds in the back of the school for students to put their horses in. Others, who walked to school, when the weather was very cold or stormy were grateful to a man named Larry Chew. Larry Chew provided the first bus service in the Mantua Township School District when he used his stagecoach to bring students to the Knight's Run School at a cost of 5 cents per student. The Knight's Run School was discontinued in 1913. When the

school ceased operations, the land was sold to Orol Ledden.



Knights Run School

As can be seen in the picture, the Knight's Run School had a belfry and a bell. The fate of that school bell is unknown.

As the 1800's came to a close, the Mantua Township School Board began to realize that a dreadful condition was fast approaching. The existing schools were aging fast. The student population was growing. Overcrowding was becoming a serious issue. The old wooden schoolhouses were obsolete. The times were crying out for something to be done. Even with this upcoming crisis, there were some citizens who were against change and wanted to get rid of the educational facilities in Barnsboro altogether.

Next Tuesday evening at 7 o'clock will be held the Mantua Township School District Meeting for the election of three members of the Board of Education to take the place of Thomas C. Dilks, of Mantua ; Hiram M. James and Chris. VanMeeter, of Sewell, and the voting of special school district appropriations. Also, will be submitted the proposition of adding better schooling facilities at the Barnsboro Academy. But we understand that a determined effort will be made by some of the citizens of the township to have the village school entirely abolished, as there are too many scholars already, and more school room would only add to the burden of "teaching the young ideas how to shoot." Now my idea would be to turn the Academy into a power house, and build a trolley from Mantua to Pitman, and send the children hereabout to those places for their education, or else turn on more light so that our wiseacres can see where they are at.

Gloucester County Democrat, Thursday, March 6, 1899

The issue of building a new school might have been decided by mother nature, but, as usual, based in the history of Barnsboro and the residents, they rallied and saved their beloved Barnsboro Academy from the wrath of mother nature.

The Barnsboro school house was struck and caught on fire, but by the prompt action of a bucket brigade it was saved. At Hurffville the barn on the farm of Harry B. Ivans was destroyed. Eight cows and a calf perished in the flames, but all the horses were saved.

Philadelphia Inquirer, Friday, July 31, 1903

Today's Word

Wiseacre – a person who acts as though he were much wiser than he really is.

This word appears in the 1899, Gloucester County Democrat newspaper article.

AT BARNSBORO.

During the fierce electrical storm that visited this vicinity Wednesday, lightning struck the Barnsboro Academy about ten o'clock and set the belfrey on fire. But for prompt work on the part of our citizens the whole structure would have burned down. During the storm Joseph White had four hogs killed by lightning. Fires could be seen in the direction of Mullica Hill, Clayton and Hurffville.

With nothing settled, the problems with the old wooden schools persisted. For the Barnsboro Academy, some statistics were published concerning attendance and testing.

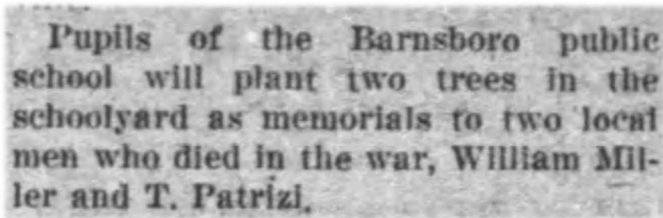
Barnsboro Academy, Principal's room, Mrs. Etta Wolfe. Total number enrolled, March 1, 25; average daily attendance, 18; percentage of attendance, 90; those not absent or tardy, 6; Minnie Miller, Marion Gardner, Millerd Huling, Willie Miller, Isaac Taylor and Gaw Jackson. Those having 90 per cent. or over in test are Minnie Miller, 94; Frank McFarlane, 95; Ruth Applebee, 90; Howard Lafferty, 92. Primary Room, Miss Irene Shute. Total number enrolled, March 1, 30; average daily attendance, 21; percentage of attendance, 85. Those not absent or tardy, 6; Anna Jessup, Elsie Eachus, Stanley Goodwin, Martha Jackson, Joseph Hoffman and Gladys Pettit. Those having 90 per cent. or over in test are Gladys Pettit, 95; Stanley Goodwin, 90; and Joseph Hoffman, 90.

Gloucester County Democrat, Thursday, April 2, 1908

In the above newspaper article, there are two names that are a part of Barnsboro's history. Minnie Miller is the sister of Willie Miller. Willie Miller, aka William Benjamin Miller, Jr., would grow up and enlist in the United States Army during WW I. He was sent to fight in France and participated in some of the most ferocious and deadliest campaigns during that war. Sadly, William B. Miller, Jr. never made it home. He died in France in 1919. In 1919, a tree was planted in the schoolyard of the Barnsboro School in his honor.

He gave his life to his country and the students of Barnsboro School were not going to forget William.

William B. Miller, Jr. would be just one of the many people who walked the halls and sat in the classrooms of the Barnsboro School.



Pupils of the Barnsboro public school will plant two trees in the schoolyard as memorials to two local men who died in the war, William Miller and T. Patrizi.



Class picture taken outside of the Barnsboro Academy. William B. Miller, Jr. is in the back row, fourth from the left.

On the other side of the township's school district, the residents of Sewell were up against a call for the approval of a new school to replace the Knights Run School. They did not approve it.

Following are two newspaper clippings. The first is from the Courier Post, Thursday, April 10, 1911. It talks about the school problems in Sewell. What was happening with schools in Barnsboro was apparently happening in Sewell also.

The second newspaper clipping was yet another proposal to solve the school problems in both Barnsboro and Sewell at the same time. This proposal called for the building of one new school that would serve both Barnsboro and Sewell while at the same time closing the Emlin School, the Barnsboro Academy and the Knights Run School. This clipping appeared in the Gloucester County Democrat on February 29, 1912.

This new plan was a controversial one, closing three schools and building just one to replace them. There were other things involved besides money, not the least of which was a location for the school. In 1912, many roads were not paved. The automobile was becoming more common. There was the taking into account that a creek running between Barnsboro and Sewell would have to be crossed by school children in all kinds of weather.

Leading up to this time, no tax money had been allocated to address not only the road conditions but also the paths that pedestrians, and in particular, school children would have to walk along. It was clear that more than just replacing schools were in the mix of the discussions. The safety of school children also had to be considered.

This proposal for a single school to replace three old wooden schools did not come to be. There just had to be another way.

At this same time there were problems rapidly getting worse in Mantua itself with the Mantua Academy. The student population was growing. The 1874 schoolhouse needed major repairs with the possibility of an addition to the school. New State laws concerning the construction and maintenance of schools were being enacted. All the while, school board members were facing tough choices on multiple fronts between the law, finding the funds necessary to solve the problems, providing a quality education for school children and township voters' wrath. School board members were elected by the voters. The school board spent money, but it was the voters, the residents of the communities, who paid that money.

The year of 1911 had closed with no solution at hand. The situation continued to worsen. Procrastination was not on the side of the existing problem. Something had to be done. In the early part of the year of 1912, yet another solution had not come to be as described above.

In the late summer of 1912. the first glimmers of a solution began to appear. The solution would lead to the construction of two new school "fortresses", the twins were about to be born.

MANTUA VOTERS NOT READY FOR SCHOOL

Attempt to Have Building
Erected at Sewell Defeated
By Big Majority

OTHER NEWS NOTES FROM MANTUA

Mantua, N. J., Aug. 10.—By a vot of 142 against and 38 for, the voters of Mantua township on Tuesday evening at a special election of the school district held at Barnsboro, defeated the plan of the town boomers of Sewell to erect a new \$5,000 school house. The voters of the township turned out in larger number than they do on regular elections and besides they had the women with them. The company that is developing the tract made a hard plea for the passage of the appropriation but it had no effect on the voters who argued that they could see their tax rate going from \$1.40 to \$2. There are only 30 pupils in Sewell and these go to the Knight's Run School, a short

distance from the town. It was held by the voters that so long as there are no more pupils in the town it would be useless to construct a building costing \$5,000. Now an effort is to be made to incorporate the town of Sewell and the company proposes in this manner to even up things with the voters by having the township lose the taxes which would otherwise be paid. The school house at Barnsboro is in a deplorable state and an effort is to be made before the next meeting of the Board of Education to have necessary repairs made to the building.

The handsome new tug boat owned by the Gallenthin Brothers was christened on Sunday and the owners entertained a party of twenty guests on a trial trip down the creek. The engines and boat gave a very good account of themselves and the owners were highly pleased with the success of the trip. The handsome craft is equipped with a set of engines rated at 75 horse power and they are of the latest type. The new boat is one of the best that has ever floated upon the river and since its launching has attracted many experts.

BARNSBORO.

The question of school facilities has reached a serious stage in this section of Mantua Township and one that will have to be met in the very near future. The proposition that was placed before the voters last year of building a new school house at Sewell at a cost of \$5,000 did not meet with the approval of the people and was defeated, much to the chagrin of those who agitated the movement. Now that something will soon have to be done in that direction, the question should be looked into and given proper and due consideration, and the most economical plan for the benefit of the community found. The annual school meeting is but a few weeks off and that is the place and time that such matters should be brought to the attention of the people and the matter thoroughly discussed. A plan has

been suggested that a graded school be built between Sewell and Barnsboro, at a place that will be convenient for both places, and do away with the three school houses at present used, which as we understand are antiquated and not up to the requirements of the law for school purposes, and would afford better conditions for the training of the scholars where they could receive better attention than is now possible under existing conditions. It is only a question of a short time when new buildings will have to take the places of the old ones and one building large enough to accommodate all would in the long run mean less expense.

The question of foot paths from Barnesboro to Sewell has been discussed here for the last few years, but as yet nothing has been done toward placing one there for use of pedestrians. Whenever the proposition has been brought to the attention of those having charge of the roads the plea has been that no money has been appropriated for that purpose and nothing could be done. There is to-day what remains of that which was once a path part of the way and in weather those who walk have to wade in mud ankle deep the rest of the way and the travel by foot is heavy and something must be done to remedy the evil. The agitation has been on long enough for those who have the matter in charge of making the budget each year to make provisions for it, but as they have neglected to do so, it is time for the people to find out why it can't be done.

SPECIAL SCHOOL MEETING.

Mantua Township.

A special school meeting will be held in Mantua township on Saturday, June 15, next, for the purpose of deciding for or against the erection of a new school house at Sewell at a cost of \$500 for land and \$6,000 for a two-room school building and furniture.

Also, to erect a two-room school house at Barnsboro and furnish and equip same, \$6,000.

Also, to erect an addition to the school house at Mantua and equip same at a cost not to exceed \$3,000. Total \$15,000.

Ballots embodying the above have been printed and will be circulated. The official call for the election, which will give the place and hours during which the polls will be open, has not yet reached us.

Gloucester County Democrat, June 6, 1912

Mantua was the first community to get to vote on this issue in June of 1912.

Did You Know?

There are a few people living in Mantua Township today who can remember the Mantua school at the corner of Mantua Boulevard and Norris Streets. The reason that they remember the school is because they attended classes there and one even remembers the thrill of getting to ring the school's bell.

News Flash

GEN. SEWELL DEAD
 Senior United States
 Senator's End Came
 Peacefully This
 Morning.
 SURROUNDED BY HIS FAMILY
 A Brilliant Soldier, an Eminent
 Statesman and
 Prominent Man
 of Affairs.
 THREE TIMES SENATOR

Jersey City News, December 27, 1901

A follow-up meeting was made in Barnsboro.

Mantua, N. J., Aug. 12.—At a special meeting of the Board of Education of Mantua township to be held this evening in the school house at Barnsboro, bids will be opened for the erection of new school houses at Sewell and Barnsboro, and also for the repairs recommended by the State Board of Education on the school building in Mantua. The bids are being asked in accordance with the result of a recent election when the Board of Education was authorized to expend \$6,000 for a new school building at Sewell, \$6,000 for a new building at Barnsboro and \$3,000 for repairs to the Mantua school building. Each of the new buildings are to be of stone construction and one story high. They will be built along such lines as to allow the addition of a second-story wherever occasion may demand. The Board of Education of the township is now

The twin sister schools were now on the way. These weren't just any old stone schools. They were fortresses, built to last, which they have. Most importantly, they were built to allow the addition of a second floor whenever the situation occurred that required it. The voters and the school board had gotten the solution that both were looking for. The money was being spent wisely. The deal was like the navy paying for a small destroyer and walking away with a new battleship for the same price. The twin sister schools of Barnsboro and Sewell had finally arrived. By the school year of 1913-1914 the twins were ready.

At a public sale conducted under the direction of the Mantua Township Board of Education on the property in Barnsboro, on Saturday afternoon, the ancient public school building there was sold to Joseph Shuster for the sum of \$36. It will cost Mr. Shuster at least \$100 to move the building. The building was an old landmark and had been in service for the past 50 years. Work is to begin immediately on the new building and it is to be completed in time for the opening of the school session in the fall.

Courier Post, July 15, 1913

The legacy of the twin sister schools of Barnsboro and Sewell was just getting started. It would continue for one hundred and ten years and counting. To start with, the schools have outlasted their three predecessors, the Emlin School (70 years of operation), the Barnsboro Academy (62 years of operation) and the Knights Run School (43 years of operation). They have even outlasted the 1804 schoolhouse in Mantua (70 years of operation) and the Mantua Academy, built in 1874 (66 years of operation).

In the immediate years after the construction of the new schools in Sewell and Barnsboro, there was good news and cause for celebration.

**BARNSBORO PUPILS MAKE
RECORD FOR PAST MONTH.**

Barnsboro, Oct. 9.—The pupils of the Barnsboro school who were perfect in attendance and punctuality for the month of September were as follows:

Grammar Grade—Lawson Catling, Kempton Field, Lowell Goodwin, George Koshler, Leon King, Ernest Landell, Hugh McGonigle, Lucy Applebee, Elsie Eachus, Dorothy Frye, Louella Reeves, Hazel Wheeler.

Primary Room—Isaac Dilks, George MacFarlane, Norman Kirkbride, Geo. Daminger, William Chalfant, Wilbur Goodwin, Lester Bowling, Norman Eachus, William Gardiner, Charles Gardiner, Alvin Price, Everett Tyson, Herman Worthington, Edward MacFarlane, Douglas Dreby, Emerson Goodwin, Frederick Adrain, Ethel Catling, Mabel MacFarlane, Dorothy Dreby, Edna Schaub, Ruth Haines, Ethel Chew, Ethel Adrain, Verna Palmer, Grace Wilson, Margaret McGonigle, Annie McGonigle, Francis Anderson.

Courier Post October 9, 1915

Take note of some of the prominent family members of the time in the above news articles such as Eachus, Applebee, Chew, Dilks, Daminger and Kirkbride.

BARNSBORO BOY WINNER OF SPELLING CONTEST

Barnsboro, May 2.—The yearly spelling contest to select the best boy and girl speller to represent Mantua Township in the Gloucester county spelling bee to be held in Woodbury in the near future was held in the Mantua school house, the schools of Mantua, Barnsboro and Sewell competing. The affair was spirited from start to finish and resulted in Darwin McCormack, of Barnsboro, winning.

School at Barnsboro To Graduate 13

Barnsboro, June 9—Certificates will be awarded a class of 13 at graduation exercises of the Barnsboro eighth grade tonight.

The program will be held at 8 p. m. in the Barnsboro Methodist Church. The Rev. Jacob H. Naglee, pastor, will address the class.

Harry Buch, principal of the Barnsboro school, will preside at the program. Certificates will be presented by Dr. Harold Simmerman, a member of the Mantua Township Board of Education.

The graduates are Marion Hopely, Frances Johnson, Katherine Ledrick, Margaret Leon, Margaret Moore, Helen Pierce, Joan Schaefer, Mary Davidson, Alvin Beck, Wayne Eachus, Michael Hummel, Lloyd Jenkins and Robert Kirkbride.

Even with the apparent solving of problems through the new school construction, the same problems as before began to crop up again, population growth in the township resulting in more students, tax rate problems and high building costs. Whether it was because of high building costs or just looking for an easy way to solve the problems, the township's school board sought to come up with a quick, relatively cheap fix to the problem. One of the things that was tried was the transfer of students from one school to another. This did not go well and led to a revolt among students and their parents. Another was the use of "portable schools". Portable schools were cheaply constructed, temporary school rooms that could be constructed to alleviate overcrowding in schools. In the long run, the "Band-Aid" approach to using portable schools proved unsafe as windstorms proved destructive to them.

In Sewell, one portable school was constructed. In Mantua, two portable schools were constructed on the land where eventually J. Mason Tomlin Elementary School was built. Additionally, Mantua made use of a vacant warehouse to house classrooms. In Barnsboro, no portable schools were constructed. Instead, temporary school classrooms were made possible by making use of the second floor of the nearby Barnsboro Fire Company's fire house.

Portables at Mantua,

Mantua township has sought to get around the period of high cost of school buildings by providing three portable school houses, two at the town of Mantua and one at Sewell. The township appropriates \$10,000 for the sites and portable buildings. Since these buildings have been set up, some of the taxpayers have raised the question that it might have been better to have erected one small permanent building. They claim that that is eventually what will have to be done to provide the much-needed school facilities.

Mantua Portable School Wrecked By High Wind

MANTUA, Jan. 29.—A portable school house was wrecked by the gale here yesterday and pupils fled from their desks when the frail structure threatened to collapse. There was a rending of timbers shortly after school convened.

The teacher, Mrs. Richman, had gone to the adjoining school house to see another teacher, Miss Anna Sharp, and then dismissed them.

school matters. She returned a moment after and saw her pupils running screaming from the building without hats or coats.

The wind had torn loose one end of the frame building so that the roof bulged and threatened to fall upon the heads of the children. The teacher had the pupils obtain their hats and coats

The Morning Post – Friday, January 29, 1926

MANTUA TOWNSHIP

Mantua, N. J., Dec. 3.—The Mantua Township Board of Education held their monthly meeting last evening in the school house at Barnsboro and

finally disposed of the matter of providing additional room for the overcrowded school conditions at the Mantua School Buildings. The board decided to rent the Eagle building for school purposes. It was shown that this could be done in a satisfactory manner to permit the opening of the new branch next Monday morning. The board also elected Miss E. S. Ladell, of Woodbury, as a teacher for the new school. The first grade will be taken out of the present building and placed in the Eggie building to make room for the more advanced grades in the old building. There was considerable discussion over the question as to who is to pay for the many broken window and door lights in the various school buildings of the township. It has been the rule to compel the pupils breaking windows to pay for the same but the youngsters have failed to make good in several cases and especially where the glass has been broken in doors. The board ruled that hereafter parents of pupils will be held responsible for any broken glass in any of the buildings.

Courier Post, December 3, 1914

BARNSBORO PUPILS PROTEST TRANSFER

Barnsboro, Nov. 19.—Such vigorous protests were raised by some of the pupils and parents against the transfer of eighth grade pupils from Barnsboro to the Mantua school that the Mantua township board of education appointed a special committee to investigate the matter at its regular November meeting last night.

Charles W. Goodwin, of Barnsboro, resigned as a member of the board and as district clerk. He declared that he was thoroughly disgusted with so much wrangling. His resignation was reluctantly accepted by the rest of the board when he positively refused to serve any longer. His successor will not be named until a later meeting.

Mrs. Tressa Wilson and Mark Worrell headed a delegation of parents who objected to the transfer of pupils from here to Mantua. The board of education said the move had been made because of the over crowded condition of schools in the township. George Van Meter, of Sewell, and John Coombs and R. William Kean, both of Mantua, were named on a committee to investigate these protests.

Complaint was made over the drinking water now being provided for children at the portable schools at Mantua. The water company has been asked to run pipes to these schools but has not yet done so.

High school pupils of Mantua and vicinity are now being transported to Woodbury by bus under a new arrangement. Weekly tickets are issued for rides. Heretofore pupils were allowed so much each month for their fares on regular passenger buses but complaint was made that many of them were begging rides in autos and pocketing their fare allowance.

These temporary fixes were clearly not the answer to the problems.

The inevitable had to be faced, that being a new school in Mantua and additions put on the Sewell and Barnsboro Schools. This time the cost would not be just \$18,000, but \$90,000.

the future and there was enough ground to build a stone addition to them. These two schools were ready to evolve with the changing times.

Work started on the additions, and they were ready for the 1930-31 school year.

Barnsboro.—Foundations are nearly completed for the additions to the Sewell and Barnsboro schools. At the present rate of progress it is expected that the schools will be ready for use by September.

The new school in Mantua has grown significantly in size over the years, as did the Sewell School with more additions beyond those of 1930.

Today, the Barnsboro School still stands but it is not used for school classrooms. It houses the township's Board of Education administration offices. In either case, the twin sister schools are still in use, 110 years after they were built.

Trivia

In the history of Sewell and its predecessor name, who is probably the best known, historical example of a resident of Sewell.

- A. William Joyce Sewell
- B. Orol Ledden
- C. Jesse Chew
- D. Charles Depps
- E. Andrew Harris Lawson

Think Carefully. You may be surprised at the correct answer (see page 21).

**TWO SCHOOLS ENLARGED;
NEW ONE AT MANTUA**

Filling a need that has existed for a number of years, the new modern six-room school on the Mantua-Pitman turnpike at Mantua has just been occupied. The building is of brick and cut stone and has an auditorium in the basement which can accommodate 300 persons.

Modern in every respect, with plumbing, vapor heating, ventilation and fire protection, the new structure has replaced two old portable schools, dating back to war days, which once occupied the site.

At Barnsboro and Sewell, two-room additions and an auditorium were added to the schools there. Plans for all three projects were done by F. Herbert Radey, Camden architect, and approved by the Mantua Township Board of Education. All three projects amounted to \$90,000. General construction was done by Carl Turner, Oaklyn; plumbing and heating by H. Knecht Co., Inc., Collingswood, and electrical work by Beatty & Walton, Merchantville.

Mantua.—The new six-room brick schoolhouse at the edge of Mantua is under roof and it is expected that the contractor will have it fully completed within another month. This modern schoolhouse has gone up quickly on the site of the two portable schools, which were used for a number of years while building costs were so high.

In Sewell and Barnsboro, the twin sister, fortress-like schools had been built with the future in mind. They were built to accept a second floor if needed in

If there were any major concerns about the post 1930's Sewell School, it was the outbreak of diseases which prompted the Board of Education for all of Mantua Township to rectify that problem quickly.

PUPIL STRICKEN ILL; SEWELL SCHOOL CLOSED

The borough school in Sewell, Gloucester county, has been closed by the Mantua Township Board of Education until further notice as the result of a case of infantile paralysis.

The Sewell victim is Patty Barrett, 11, a sixth grade pupil, who was stricken Saturday. Her condition was reported serious today at the home of her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George B. Hurff, Sr., with whom she lives. The girl's left side is paralyzed.

The girl is the first Sewell child reported stricken since outbreak of the disease in South Jersey. Fearing further spread of the disease there, George W. Van Meter, president of the school board, ordered the closing of the school, a four-room structure.

Mantua. — Through arrangements made by the Mantua Township Board of Education, treatments for the prevention of diphtheria will be given pupils of the township schools on Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings of this week in the primary school here by local physicians.

Later in the century, students were required to be immunized against Polio, Diphtheria and Whooping Cough before enrolling in public schools.

30 BABY'S IMMUNIZATION RECORD

Disease	Product Used	Date Given	Result
Smallpox			Result
Whooping Cough		12-17-54	Result
Diphtheria		2-7-55	
		3-11-55	
Tetanus		12-17-54	
		2-7-55	
Schick Test		3-11-55	Result
			Result
Dick Test			
Scarlet Fever			
Typhoid			

Handwritten notes:
 1 Salk Nov 3-25-56
 2 " 5-5-56 (4) Salk Booster Nov 1957
 3 " 10-15-56

Immunization Records from Don B. Weems, MD, Wenonah, New Jersey for a child born in 1954

In the case of the soldiers who fought, with many dying, at Fort Mercer and Fort Mifflin, the sister fortresses talked about in the first paragraph of this article, their names may never be known. In Barnsboro, standing in front of one of the twin sisters, fortress-like schools of Barnsboro and Sewell, is a memorial dedicated to those who fought, with some dying, in World War Two who came from Barnsboro. Their names will never be forgotten. There is a sense of reverence, of honor, of pride, when you stand in front of that memorial and read the names on it all the while realizing that some of them walked the halls and sat in the classrooms of the Barnsboro School. There is a great connection between the school and the memorial. It is almost a hallowed connection between the two.

Barnsboro School, hallowed ground, the school, the Veterans' Memorial, and the Flags



There is also a family connection between the two. Many of the soldiers named on the memorial have descendants still living in the area. The school and the memorial offer them a place of remembrance and reflection.

It is now for the living, to never forget that connection between these soldiers and the school that they attended. For those who are not connected to the soldiers on the monument or the school, it is a place to go, to see yet another example of the rich history of Mantua Township and realize just how important it is to preserve structures like the twin, sister schools in Barnsboro and Sewell.

They, along with the renovated and preserved 1874 Mantua Academy, now the home of the Mantua Township Historical Commission and the Carpenter House which was the home of Thomas Carpenter who lent his name to Carpenter's Landing, a former name of Mantua and the Jesse Chew house and Jesse Chew Cemetery in Sewell, reminders of a Revolutionary War time in Mantua Township's history and the family name which was an early name for Sewell, that being Chewsville and the Barnsboro Inn, a structure that existed in Revolutionary War times, should always remain as reminders to Mantua Township's rich history.

If the walls of the twin sister schools of Sewell and Barnsboro could only talk. What stories might they tell of the people who went to those schools?

What events might they talk about? In all of Gloucester County and perhaps the entire state of New Jersey, are there two, twin sister, fortress-like schools that still exist and are over 100 years old? Probably not.

People today can stand in front of an old school and tell their children that they went to that school. They may even tell their children that their grandparents went to that school. In Sewell and Barnsboro, there may be people living today who can tell their children that, "your great, grandparents went to that school". That's an awesome statement to make, yet a very possible one to make.

Standing in front of either of these sister schools is like looking at a piece of living history. History is something that should never be forgotten. History defines who people and communities are. The sister schools of Sewell and Barnsboro defines part of Mantua Township's history. They existed during World War I, the Spanish Flu Pandemic, the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, the "cold war", the Kennedy assassination, the moon landings, all the Gulf Wars and the War in Afghanistan. It cannot be said that they are not historical structures.

It All Comes Back to Sewell

By Jeff Gellenthin and Herb Hood

Arabella Chew was born in Salem, Salem County, New Jersey on July 25, 1823. She is the daughter of Joseph and Maria Chew. Joseph was born on April 13, 1800, in New Jersey and died on April 6, 1879, in Salem, New Jersey. He is buried in the First Presbyterian Cemetery in Salem, New Jersey along with his wife, Maria Sinnickson who was born on January 8, 1801, in Penns Neck, New Jersey and died on February 14, 1873, in Salem, New Jersey.

On February 22, 1848, Arabella married William Penn Chattin in Salem, New Jersey. They had one child, Hannah "Sadie" Chattin.

The 1880 census indicates that the family lived on East Broadway in Salem. The census also lists Arabella's occupation as "Notions and Trimmings", indicating that she was a high-end seamstress and likely made many of the wedding gowns for local brides.

Arabella died on March 1, 1893, in Hamilton, Mercer County, New Jersey. She is buried in the First Presbyterian Cemetery in Salem, Salem County, New Jersey.



Arabella had two notable brothers. They were Henry Franklin Chew and Sinnickson Chew.

Henry Franklin Chew was born in 1837 and died in 1918. He is buried in the Harleigh Cemetery in Camden, New Jersey. He was a Lt. Colonel in the 12th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry.

Evening Journal, Vineland, New Jersey, April 11, 1879, page 3

Mr. JOSEPH R. CHEW died this week in Salem in the 79th year of his age Mr. Chew was a life-long resident of Salem, and was the inventor of the Chew plow. As far back as 1848 he represented his county in the Legislature, and was for fourteen years Collector of Mannington township, besides holding other important offices of trust.





Henry Franklin Chew

Sinnickson Chew was born in 1830 and died in 1901. He is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Camden, New Jersey. Sinnickson was the owner of the National Standard, a Salem County Newspaper.



Joseph Richards Chew is the son of Jesse Chew, Jr. (1773 – 1812) and Keziah Kinsey (1773 – 1826).

Jesse Chew, Jr. is the son of Jesse Chew (1737 – 1812) and Mary Richards (1731 – 1816), both are buried in the Jesse Chew Cemetery in Sewell, New Jersey. This ancestry tree makes Arabella Chew the great granddaughter of Jesse Chew.

What is Arabella Chew’s contribution to history? In the Salem County Historical Society Museum, there is a quilt that Arabella made. On the quilt is Arabella’s connection to Sewell.

From the Chairman’s Files

Before the area surrounding the Barnsboro Station (now the Sewell Railroad Station), was named "Sewell's City"; it was first named "Green Lawn". Green Lawn was the first attempt at developing the area as a residential district. Soon after its beginnings, it ceased. And soon enough, Sewell the Suburb was put on the map.

“Green Lawn” is the name of the new town to be started on the line of the West Jersey Railroad, at Barnsboro Station.

This tidbit appeared in the Evening Journal (Vineland, NJ) on Monday, December 8, 1884.

The “Lafayette Quilt” (c. 1890), made by Arabella Chatten, on display at the Salem County Historical Society Museum.



The Chew Family Arms



From the Museum



In 1911, a fire broke out in Mantua that threatened to destroy the town. It took a herculean effort by the Mantua Fire Company with assistance from Woodbury's Friendship Fire Company, the Barnsboro Fire Company, and the Wenonah Fire Company to contain and then put out the blaze, saving Mantua from a catastrophe. In the process they saved the Telford Inn which was also the home of Charles Hohlweg. To show his deep gratitude, Charles donated land so that the Mantua Fire Company could build a firehouse. In one of the sheds next to the Telford Inn was the bottling facilities of Charles Hohlweg where he bottled beer.



Message from the Chairman – Jeffrey Gellenthin

Spring is considered by many to be a new beginning. Possibly a time to reset your mind, your body, and your actions. Spring can also be a time for cleaning and organizing. As a historic preservation group, the Mantua Township Historical Commission is constantly in the cleaning and organizing mode. We have many artifacts, documents, and other items in our possession that we store, display, and share with the public in our museum and research library. The donation of historic items and information from residents of the Township and others has been a very important part of our growth and ability to tell a clearer story of our precious past. We have made great strides in recent years, of bringing together the many stories and bits of tales that cover the last 200 years. There has been many rumors and much hearsay proven or dispelled by our members and others research. This has been made possible by the support of the public and your sharing of family history, local stories, and artifacts.

I recently attended an estate sale in a neighboring town. It was the property of a prominent resident that was known for collecting antiques and local history items. I arrived later in the day, only to hear that I had missed the good stuff. Items relevant to the town and the surrounding area are now scattered across the land, and possibly separated from their origin forever. I can only imagine that the owner would have wanted to share some of his findings with his community, but never expressed it to his family or felt that there was more time to do so. With this, I encourage you to visit your collections and photo albums. Share with your family the details that go with them. Write down your memories and tell your story. Spring clean and organize your personal history. Visit our museum. See what we have so far and consider adding your part to our township story.

RECENT DONATIONS

Bob Hicks - a Methodist hymn book with the date of 1875 and the names of Mary and Anna Kirkbride, Barnsboro, N.J. written inside.

Mike DiGiamberardino – Books about Cape May and Gloucester County History, various books, pamphlets, glasses, and maps, a Bible belonging to Dr. A.L. Montgomery, a Bicentennial “76” flag, and National Bank of Mantua ashtrays.

Don Keeler – National Bank of Mantua bottles, newspaper article about the Senior Center, and a teacher’s school bell.

Carolyn Olsen – a presentation lectern (used by Carolyn the schoolteacher).

Kathy MacGregor – Political buttons, various booklets and pamphlets, and miscellaneous bottles.

Herb Hood – Copies (52) of GCHS Bulletins ranging from 1947-2023, a map of Carpenter’s Landing, and documents (5) pertaining to Mary Eastlack.

Ralph Richards – Pitman Centennial Celebration booklet and video (cd) presentation.

IN MEMORIAM

George Jay Downing – Father of Tom Downing, current member of the Mantua Township Historical Commission, who passed away on December 7, 2022.

THANK YOU

Mayor Robert Zimmerman and the members of the Mantua Township Committee, for their continued support.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mantua Township Historical Commission

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**Our mission is to preserve and share the rich
history of Mantua Township.**

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/
MantuaTownshipHistoricalCommission](http://www.facebook.com/MantuaTownshipHistoricalCommission)

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Jeff Gellenthin, Chairman

Herb Hood, Vice Chairman

Commission Members

Jeff Gellenthin – Chairman

Herb Hood – Vice Chairman

Carolyn Olsen – Secretary

Kathy Mac Gregor

Carolyn Harris

Tom Downing

Barbara Heitman

Debbie Gellenthin

Kevin Hale

Art Olson

Gone, But Not Forgotten



Gloucester County Democrat, January 3, 1895

Future Events – Mark your Calendar

South Jersey History Fair – Saturday, June 10th,
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, rain date: Sunday, June 11th,
Gabriel Daveis Tavern, 500 3rd Avenue, Glendora,
New Jersey

This Quarterly Bulletin may not be reproduced in
whole or in part without expressed written
permission of the Mantua Township Historical
Commission.

The Mantua Township Historical Commission is
always accepting donations of artifacts, pictures,
maps, documents and stories concerning the rich
history of Mantua Township.

Donations will be gratefully accepted at any
museum opening or by contacting Chairman Jeff
Gellenthin.

Trivia Answer (from page 13)

The correct answer is “C”.

Although William Joyce Sewell is who Sewell is named for, he did not live in Sewell. He lived in Camden and is buried in Camden.

Orol Ledden is Sewell’s most famous businessman ever, but he is not the historically correct answer.

Charles Debbs was Sewell’s longest serving Postmaster, serving Sewell from 1884 until 1898, however, he is not the correct answer.

Andrew Harris Lawson lived in Sewell. He was a veteran of World War II who was captured by the Japanese when they took the Philippines. Andrew survived the Bataan Death March while a POW of the Japanese. He lost his life when his prison ship was torpedoed by an American submarine. His name is inscribed on a monument in the Philippines and his empty grave with a headstone is in the Hillcrest Cemetery.

Jesse Chew is the correct answer. Long before Sewell was known as Sewell it was called Chewsville. Today’s Mantua Boulevard running from Mantua to Sewell was known at one time as Chew Road. The Jesse Chew house and the Jesse Chew cemetery are in Sewell. Jesse Chew was a Methodist preacher. Two of his sons became Methodist preachers. At least five of his grandsons became Methodist preachers. Two of those went West to spread the Methodist faith and thus became early westward pioneers. Three of Jesse’s grandchildren married into the Barnsboro Driver family. During the Revolutionary War, British soldiers, on a foraging expedition paid a visit to his home in Sewell. Jesse is the great grandson of the first Chew to settle in New Jersey, Richard Chew.

Bonus – The crossing of the Mantua Creek – by Jeff Gellenthin

The below article appeared in the Courier Post on Saturday, May 17, 1913. It discusses the discovery of a historic cedar road that was built possibly before the idea of the building of a high and dry bridge across the Mantua Creek. This type of crossing is sometimes referred to as a corduroy road. It is made by placing logs perpendicular to the direction of the road over a low or swampy area. As the Mantua Creek is tidal, this type of construction is generally restricted to a low tide crossing. The article mentioned a ford at the creek. A ford is a shallow place with good footing where a creek may be crossed by wading. The combination of a cedar road and a ford, if crossed at low tide would be consider ideal. Imagine the days when a horse and wagon were the only means of transportation. The tide, rainstorms, flooding, ice, and the need of regular repair of the crossing would make an unplanned ride to the city nearly impossible.

“In the course of their work in dredging a channel from Mantua Creek across the meadows to the adjoining hills for Job Scott, on the farm formerly owned by the late Allen Morgan, Chew Brothers have found it necessary to remove an old cedar road over almost the entire distance of their dredging. Undoubtedly this was used to connect with a ford at the creek, and in all probability was used before there was a bridge over the creek at Mantua and Wenonah. All of the cedar rails taken from the roadbed are in an excellent state of preservation and show that the job was not the work of amateurs.”