

Places In Time

LAWRENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2011

Trolleys in the Lawrence Landscape 1899-1940

By Dennis Waters

In the early decades of the 20th century, more than one million passengers each year rode the two trolley lines that connected Trenton with Princeton. The roads were bad, the automobile was not yet dominant, and for a few cents the trolley was the cheapest, fastest, and generally safest way to get from point A to point B in Mercer County.

The trolley age in Lawrence Township lasted only 40 years. Two lines passed through town, and they competed for business during most of their operating lifetimes:

The “Old Line” ran up Princeton and Brunswick Avenues from Trenton, then continued on Lawrence Road and down Main Street in Lawrenceville. It turned right on Fackler Road and traveled down Princeton Pike and then cross-country into Princeton. Stopping frequently, it made the trip in about an hour. The “Old Line” was the direct ancestor of today’s New Jersey Transit 606 bus route.

The “Princeton Fast Line”—sometimes known as the “Johnson Trolley”—ran mostly across private land and made fewer stops. As a result, it could get from Trenton to downtown Princeton in less than 40 minutes. It was the weekend favorite of Princeton University students heading to Trenton for a good time. Many segments of its former right-of-way have been converted into walking and cycling trails in Lawrence.

Trolley lines were a popular investment for ambitious capitalists in turn-of-the-century America, though few of the lines proved to be real money-makers. Needless to say, corporate shenanigans and clashes between the egos of the rich and powerful were very much part of the Lawrence trolley story. So were strikes, accidents, weather disasters, and passengers having a little too much fun.

To learn more about the trolley age in Lawrence Township—including where you can see relics of the trolley lines that are still part of the landscape—join the Lawrence Historical Society for our annual meeting on Sunday, February 27, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. Visit www.TheLHS.org for more information.



A trolley of the Princeton Fast Line crosses Bayard Lane as it enters Princeton ca. 1936.

Photo from: "Trenton - Princeton Traction Company Pennsylvania and New Jersey Railway" by Barker Gummere and Gary Kleinedler and was first published in "Electric Traction Quarterly" combined fall and winter issue, 1965 Volume 4 Number 1, 2

**Annual Meeting:
February 27, 2011 2:00pm
Lawrence High School**

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION

The Board of Trustees presents the following proposed amendment to the Constitution of the Lawrence Historical Society:

Article 6 of the Constitution now reads:

“Board of Trustees: There shall be elected a minimum of seven (7) Trustees: all to be elected for the term of one (1) year. The Secretary of the Society shall be the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.”

It is proposed that Article 6 should read:

“There shall be elected a minimum of twelve (12) trustees in three (3) classes. The first class of four trustees (4) shall be elected for three (3) years. The second class of four (4) shall be elected for three (3) years in the following year, and the third class of four (4) shall be elected for three (3) years in the third year.”

In practice, for the first two years (2012 & 2013), the other members of the board would continue to be elected for one year. No restriction of re-election is intended.

If the membership votes to approve this amendment at the 2011 and 2012 Annual Meetings, it would take effect at the 2012 Annual Meeting.



Despite a one-week postponement, a crowd of just over 200 came out to the Brearley House to enjoy the

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will take place on February 27, 2011 at 2:00pm. The meeting will be held in the Commons Room at Lawrence High School. This year's lecture topic will be Trolleys in the Lawrence Landscape 1899-1940 and will be delivered by Township Historian Dennis Waters.

Board Nominations

Members will be asked to vote on the slate of nominees for the Board of Trustees for 2011. The following members have been nominated to serve this year:

Bill Agress
Ruth Barringer
Janet Bickal
Bruce Bitcover
Skip Conover
Paul Gatterdam
John Halvorsen
Jaqueline Haun
Janet Hubbard
Carolyn Kozlowski
Laura Nawrocik
Beverly Rubman
Dennis Waters
Jim Williams

WASHINGTON CROSSING SPRINT DUATHLON

Saturday, April 16, 2011

Come to Washington Crossing State Park in Mercer County, NJ at 8 a.m. to run/bike/run in honor of George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River and his victories in Trenton and Princeton. The brainchild of the late LHS board member Christopher Lahoda, this race will commemorate Revolutionary War history similar to the way the Boston Marathon recalls Paul Revere's famous ride.

More details and registration will be available shortly at www.dqtridu.com. Please feel free to contact Janet Hubbard at 609/844-0857 if you have any questions.

PORT MERCER OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, February 19, 2011

1:00pm-3:00pm

Vicki Chirco, D&R Canal State Park historian, will be hosting an open house and tours at the Port Mercer Canal House. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about the house, the canal and life during the 19th century. Registration is not required, but the event will be cancelled if there is inclement weather.

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Renew on-line at
www.TheLHS.org

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Contributors for this issue: Rina Banerjee (editor), Jim Williams (photographer), Laura Nawrocik (webmaster), Janet Bickal.
We can be contacted at the following address: webmaster@thelhs.org

2011 is the 250th Anniversary of the 1761 Brearley House.

Celebrate with us! *Renew Your Membership for 2011 Today.*

Use your credit card to renew online today at www.TheLHS.org, or complete the form below and return with your check. *Please be sure to include your email address.* We are trying to save paper and postage!

YES, please renew my membership for 2011 at the following level:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor (\$100) | <input type="checkbox"/> Please accept my extra donation of |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron/Business (\$50) | \$_____ to commemorate the 250 th |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$40) | anniversary of the 1761 Brearley House |
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Make check payable to: The Lawrence Historical Society, PO Box 6025, Lawrence Township, NJ 08648

The Lawrence Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.