George Hammell Cook was raised on a small farm in Hanover, NJ, in the early 1800s. In 1853 at the invitation of then President Theodore Frelinghuysen he joined Rutgers College as professor of chemistry and natural sciences. Cook had expertise in geology, chemistry, engineering, and agriculture.

In 1864 Dr. Cook was appointed State Geologist of New Jersey and also became Vice President of Rutgers College. In New Jersey’s 1880 Geological Survey, Dr. Cook and his Staff first revealed conclusive evidence that a large lake was formed as New Jersey’s last great glacier melted and receded north about 18,000 years ago. Fairfield was first covered by a 1,200 foot deep ‘river of ice’ that sculpted the Passaic Valley between the Watchung Mountains to the East and the New Jersey Highlands to the West.

This large glacial lake was approximately 30 miles long, 8 to 10 miles wide, and up to 200 feet deep. Although this ‘discovery’ paled in comparison to Thomas Edison’s inventions at the time - to a 19th century Geologist - this was ‘most remarkable and interesting.’

It’s difficult to fathom - 180 centuries of natural erosion and geologic evolution, but its safe to conclude that the sedimentation and alluvial deposits into Lake Passaic eventually created
Fairfield’s top soils. The sandy soil outcroppings in the Passaic Valley Basin were nearly ideal for agriculture. However, pure sand lacks organic nutrients and is often considered ‘poor’ when compared to many of the other 18 N.J. soil classifications.

The Lenape Indians were our first local Farmers with their ‘large-scale agriculture’ compared to other Indian Nations to their North and West that were almost exclusively hunter gatherers. The Lenape men limited their agricultural labor to clearing the field and breaking the soil. Fairfield’s sandy soils were more easily cultivated with their crude tools but it was not as productive as other nutrient rich soils.

Even more important to the Lenape were the Passaic River and its tributaries that provided a transportation network that greatly enhanced their hunting-gathering range. This network of rivers flowing into Fairfield’s Western border ( Rockaway and Whippany Rivers ) and Eastern Border ( Pompton, Pequannock, Ramapo, Wanaque, and Mahwah Rivers ) form – what I call – the ‘Fairfield Watershed’. This unfortunate fact will surface :- ) again in our later discussion of the local “F” word ( Flooding ! ).
The Lenape also burned off their fields and meadows to ‘control’ vegetation and sometimes drive deer into the rivers where they could easily spear or club them from canoes. When the local Indian population diminished their abandoned fields were very attractive to the first Frontier Farmers (sometimes called “Holland Immigrants”) to enter the valley for settlement.

As one local Historian (John Whitehead 1901) suggested: try to imagine yourself as the very first European to view the western valley from the top of Second Watchung Mountain. It’s my guess that you would most likely see undrained meadow bottom and wet swamps surrounding vast tracts of sandy outcroppings. The Greenbrook and other Second Mountain streams and springs emptying into the Long Meadow Swamp, then draining into the Passaic River via the naturally formed Deepavaal Brook. It wasn’t perfect land, but rudimentary drainage could
greatly expand the already cultivatable sections; the coarse meadow grasses could be replaced with finer European pasture hay varieties; and the sandy soil could be enriched with manure or other organic materials like peat.

* * * * *

Circling back to George H. Cook as Head of the Rutgers Scientific School (often incorrectly called the ‘Agricultural College’), he distinguished himself by securing New Jersey’s ‘Land Grant College’ status and establishing the N.J. State (Agricultural) Experiment Station supporting all 21 N.J. Counties. Concurrently, as New Jersey State Geologist, his small Staff surveyed and topographically mapped the entire State, and provided expert engineering consultation on numerous water supply, drainage, mining, archeological, weather and museum related projects. Cook’s many earthly :- ) accomplishments are well documented in his biography: “George Hammel Cook: A life in agriculture and geology”. (available through interlibrary loan).

George Hammell Cook, New Jersey’s first true ‘Rock Star’ :- )

One of George H. Cook’s engineering students Clarence Cornelius Vermeule graduated Rutgers in 1878 and immediately began working for his mentor as a “Topographer and Surveyor”. It took ten years, but they shared the incredible accomplishment of topographically mapping the entire state, and became the first state to do so. (I guess Delaware and Rhode Island should have beat them, huh?).

While Vermuele was still a student in 1875, the Mayors of Newark and Jersey City requested NJGS to study their city water supply difficulties. (Please recall previous articles detailing the contaminated city water and 20% child mortality rates in the late 1800’s). 20 and 25 years
later, these Cities ran (phase one) pipelines from the Boonton Reservoir (to Jersey City) and the Pequannock Watershed (to Newark) with great success. Some waterborne diseases were reduced 70% immediately.

By this time George H. Cook had passed away and C.C. Vermuele had established himself as one of the Nation’s leading experts on water power and water supply. Vermuele maintained his close ties to the NJGS and also opened a private practice as a Consulting Engineer.

* * * * *

Vermuele was familiar with significant Passaic Valley floods during 1882 and 1896, but in 1902 a February ‘snow melt’ intensified flood was the second largest since records were kept (1810). Among other earlier small to medium scale proposals by the NJGS, Vermuele now jumped in with a new plan to build a ‘flowing dam’. Such a dam above Little Falls would assure that no flood waters exceeded the capacity of the lower Passaic River through the commercial, industrial, and densely inhabited communities. Unfortunately, such a dam increases flood waters above the dam and adds 3-5 days more to the length of the flood event there. Too bad Fairfield, Singac, Lincoln Park, Wayne, etc. These “undeveloped” farmlands and unsightly lowlands would be forced to ‘suffer in silence’ for Northern N.J.’s greater good.

Only four months after the 1903 NJG Survey was delivered to the Governor with Vemuele’s proposed ‘flowing dam’, the great Flood of 1903 struck with devastation never seen before or since. Hurricane Irene Flooding in 2011 came close, but the October 1903 Flood remains our very worst of all time. (Captain) Vermuele now had his ‘white whale’ to conquer, and he pledged a detailed solution for the 1905 NJG Survey.
Thus, Vermuele ‘doubled down’ in the 1905 NJGS and proposed a full scale $10,000,000 Project that would result in a 35,000 acre reservoir (this is 5 times the surface area of Lake Hopatcong, Greenwood Lake, and the Wanaque Reservoir combined!).

The following benefits were detailed by (Captain) Vermuele:

- Flood control by pre release of reservoir supply early in a heavy rain/snow melt event. Then close the gates to retain billions of gallons of 1903-like floodwaters.
- Maintain steady lower river flow during droughts to maintain hydroelectric generation at existing plants at Little Falls, Paterson and Dundee (Passaic). Also flushing the lower river of pollutants during low flow periods that cause “an offense (putrid smell) and a possible source of disease.”
- Add a hydroelectric generation plant at the new dam - generating :- ) revenue.
- Supply pure and wholesome potable water to dozens of communities including Paterson, Passaic, Montclair, Bloomfield, and others. Another revenue generator.
- Leasing waterfront property to commercial interests (“shore privileges”).
- (And my least favorite) eliminate ‘malarial swamps’ (with possible disease infected mosquitoes) that are “more or less a detriment to the health of the surrounding tracts and an eyesore in what would otherwise be one of the most charming residential districts in the state.” (Author’s note to Captain Vermuele: Phooey!)

My intention is not to write a book, so I’ll spare you the many cost details and considerations. But as a historically conditioned skeptic, I’m guessing Captain Vermuele would financially ‘go down into the briny deep with his great white elephant’ when actual costs doubled projections.

The best part of this article is the map of the proposed reservoir linked below (control + click).

Passaic Lake Interactive Map

Vermuele named his proposed reservoir “Passaic Lake” having come full circle from its much larger glacial predecessor “Lake Passaic.” It is topographically obvious that the reservoir was identical to the final drainage stage of the great glacial lake.

Had this proposal been made 20 years sooner (prior to the planning of the Jersey City and Newark pipelines) you could probably take a boat ride today from Caldwell’s Monomonock Inn dock to the Fairfield Reformed Church lighthouse!

Dedicated to the memory of George Hammell Cook an extraordinary yet humble and altruistic man whose accomplishments and contributions to New Jersey, Rutgers University, Agriculture, and Geology have yet to be equaled. High praise indeed, but well deserved.

...............Paul Pollio July 31, 2019
FAIRFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUIZ # 2

Not a trick question, but say I’m holding one quart of Fairfield floodwater in my hand from Hurricane Irene (2011). It could possibly contain water that originated from how many named New Jersey Rivers?:

A.) Only One
B.) Two to Three
C.) Four to Seven
D.) 8 or more

I think I’ll keep you in suspense for now, but remember the oft quoted saying attributed to Benjamin Franklin?:

[New Jersey is like] a beer barrel, tapped at both ends, with all the live beer running into Philadelphia and New York.

Well, think of Fairfield as a basin with two inlets at ‘both ends’. Pine Brook on the one end and Two Bridges on the other end.

First we have the (#1) Passaic River entering Fairfield at Pine Brook. But also terminating in Pine Brook is the (#2) Rockaway River carrying waters from Dover, Rockaway, Denville, Boonton, and Montville. And a very short distance upstream is the (#3) Whippany River carrying water from Morristown and Hanover.

This I call the Southern half of the ‘Fairfield Watershed.’ A term you won’t read or hear anywhere else. The Northern half of my ‘Fairfield Watershed’ flows into Two Bridges. This is where the (#4) Pompton River enters our flood basin. But the Pompton River is at the end of a large network of significant tributary rivers. The (#5) Pequannock, the (#6) Wanaque, the (#7) Ramapo, and the (#8) Mahwah Rivers (see map below).

That’s not bad enough. But in Singac the multi-sourced Passaic River Channel narrows creating a constraint that significantly raises these waters during heavy river flows. The waters naturally seek the lowest levels that
are in Fairfield, Lincoln Park, and Wayne. Under certain conditions, the Passaic River appears to flow backwards if the flood basin is low. For instance, if most of the floodwaters come from the northern section and very little water comes from the southern section.

A Friend of mine that lives off Clinton Road told me that Hurricane Irene had the worst flooding levels that Fairfield ever endured. I was surprised when he mentioned that the Pine Brook Flood Gauge read 11 inches higher than the record holding 1903 Flood. Couldn’t be, I thought, no way it could be worse than 1903. That’s when people were being boat rescued from second floor windows in Paterson and Trenton!

Well my investigation confirmed that my Friend was correct about the Pine Brook gauge readings. However, I then checked the Little Falls Gauge recordings. These told a very different story. The Little Falls gauge (upstream of the Peckman River
so this is NOT a factor) indicated a 1903 crest 39.7 inches higher than the crest recorded in 2011.

It’s better not to elaborate any further on the subject of Fairfield flooding. It’s about as popular a subject as the previous one about death itself.

Hopefully the next topic will be more pleasant.

Best Always.............Paul Pollio
FAIRFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY: ARROWHEADS

It was not unusual for Farmers in West Essex to collect American Indian arrowheads that were found on their properties. Attached is a photo of my Father’s collection that he accumulated over his 27 years on our two Pollio Family Farms located both on Fairfield Road (# 170) and also on Route 46 West @ The Horseneck Road Overpass (at that time adjacent to Romano’s Farm).

Peter Pollio (1923-1967) was also an avid Hunter and found a few of these while enjoying his favorite pastime not far from the two Farms. These ‘points’ are varied and diverse because they were crafted over 10 + centuries, were often traded among neighboring tribes, and many distant tribes visited the area in search of game and tribute (the Indian east-west “Menusen Path” crossed the Passaic River only five miles away. This is roughly 1.5 hours travel by dugout canoe).
Any student of local West Essex history is encouraged to read Benjamin R. Norwoods “Old Caldwell” published in 1927 (Fairfield Library R 974.9 NO). But in 1927 very little was known about the many significant Lenape Settlements in Fairfield/ Pine Brook and Singac.

Norwoods sources believed there was little evidence of Lenape Indian settlement here and theorized that the abundance of arrowhead points and spear heads found locally were possibly because the area was an Indian battleground of some sort.

Since 1927, a great deal of archeological evidence has been discovered, especially at the intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and the Passaic River. 3,835 artifacts were unearthed during a NJ DOT intersection redesign project in 1995. According to expert Archeologists, these artifacts indicate that the Indian Settlements could have been ‘year-round’ encampments dating back as many as 3,000 years. The estimated introduction of the bow and arrow is about 500 BC (2,500 + years ago)
This key discovery weakens the theory of a great Indian battleground in the Passaic River Valley. It’s my opinion that the numerous arrowheads and projectile points are mostly a two thousand year accumulation spread out over very bountiful hunting grounds.

It was also easy for Farmers to spot arrowheads in Fairfield’s stone-free sandy soils, and many vegetable crops were harvested in kneeling positions while pulling them up by their roots (beets, radishes, scallions, leeks, basil, dill, etc.). This close proximity to the soil and keen eyes resulted in finding many of these treasures of antiquity.

( Today Archery Hunters have Bluetooth trackable arrow nocks! Not much chance of losing one of those arrows unless a wounded game animal takes it a very long way ).

........Paul Pollio 8-28-2018

Dedicated to the memory of Peter Paul Pollio (1923-1967), belonging to the last generation of true Farmers in Fairfield. Avid big and small game hunter and casual arrowhead collector.
When reading about Fairfield you may come across a supposition that: “the Dutch decided to live on the bottomlands of the Passaic River, possibly because these lands reminded them of their native Holland.”

I’m glad that the author (Charles A. Poekel Jr.)* said “possibly” because, in my opinion, nothing was further from the truth.

**Background**

The interior of Northern New Jersey was slower to settle because of its topography and hostile Indians that were avenging “Dutch” initiated eradication between 1643 and 1645). See (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kieft%27s_War). It took decades for these atrocities to fade from memory and the eventual ‘burying of the hatchet’.

In 1664 when the English seized New Netherland Colony from the Dutch, many sought new lands in New Jersey by following the only thoroughfares then available: The Hudson, Passaic, Hackensack and Raritan rivers.

Navigation of the Passaic River ended at Acquackanonk Landing (Passaic) and further west were the Great Falls and the Little Falls. If that wasn’t enough, the Watchung’s ‘First’ and ‘Second’ Mountains could only be crossed with great difficulty. Even the few ‘notches’ were mountainous and hundreds of feet steep.

Of course these were only temporary obstacles and impediments to a growing and ever expanding population of anxious Settlers.

**Reality**

We can’t say that all Dutchmen could be reminded of their European homeland, because many, like Simon Van Ness, never even had seen the Netherlands. So what attracted our Frontier Fathers to Fairfield and the Passaic Valley?
Of course it wasn’t the geographical isolation, swamps, mosquitoes, wolves, bears, wildcats, snakes, flooding, etc.

But rather, in my view, the Following:

1. Fields that were previously farmed by the Lenape Indians (Delawares). The Indians had already deliberately altered the lands for agricultural purposes.
2. Not densely timbered with virgin forests that required laborious clearing. Especially foothills, hills, and mountains (like the surrounding Caldwell’s).
3. Mostly level, sandy soil that could be deeply cultivated and also enriched with compost and manure.
4. Vast natural hay fields and meadows for pasture and cattle bedding.
5. Surrounding Passaic River teeming with fish, turtles and waterfowl.
6. Fresh streams for possible mill sites and for watering cattle (Greenbrook, Cook’s Brook, and Deepavaal Brook).
7. Deer and small game hunting and trapping.
8. Plentiful natural berries and nuts (mast).
9. Ease of well digging and ditching.

As would be expected, the first Settlers would seek the highest elevations that featured proximity to as much as the above as possible.

Although not perfect, this was a virtual paradise to many, if not all. And, sorry Charlie, NOT because it ‘reminded them of their native Holland’

Paul Pollio - September 10, 2018

The Dey Family were one of the first ‘Jersey Dutch’ families to settle in Fairfield. (Dey is pronounced ‘die’). They are of French Huguenot ancestry that assimilated into American Dutch Culture like the local Francisco, DeBaun, Doremus, and Jacobus Families. The first Dey descendent in America arrived in New Netherlands from Amsterdam before 1641.

Seventeenth century history is confusing enough, but this Soldier of the Dutch West India Company answered to several names: Dirck Dey, Dirk Jansen, Dirk Siecken, Dirck Jansen Dey, and more. Married twice, his descendents were key pioneer settlers in old Bergen County (Wayne, Paterson, Totowa) and the northern part of old Essex County (Singac & Fairfield).

By naming many Dey children Dirck or Theunis generation after generation creates some confusion today. If Dey Ancestry might interest you, here’s a good place to start: Dey Family

In the mid 1700’s two significant Dey buildings were being constructed. The Lower Preakness 'Mansion' that has been meticulously restored as twice General George Washington’s Revolutionary War Headquarters, and its long gone cousin the Dey Inn of Fairfield Village.

The Dey Mansion survived 18 changes in ownership after being sold by General (Dirck) Richard Dey in 1801. The Passaic County Parks Commission acquired it in January 1930 and opened it as a historical museum after WPA project renovations and additions.
Of course the Dey Inn had much less historical significance than it’s Lower Preakness cousin, but tradition has it that General Washington dined here and feasted on their specialty: Guinea Hen Soup. But what made the Inn special was its role in Fairfield’s early years. It was much more than a Hotel and Tavern, it eventually became the commercial center of the Community. Only the Dutch Reformed Church outranked it for social and cultural importance.

Location, location, location, right? When ‘Two Bridges’ was called ‘No Bridges’ it nonetheless was the origin of Fairfield’s roads. That’s because the Passaic and Pompton Rivers could be forded there. It was once called ‘Washington’s Ford’ because he crossed there. At that time it may have been called ‘One Bridge’, but the actual bridge construction dates are unknown to this writer. (Google ‘Washington’s Ford’ and you’ll link to a Ford Auto Dealer in PA :-)

Generation after generation the Inn stayed in the Dey Family as it evolved over the years. Always an Inn, it accommodated Teamsters, Travelers, Settlers heading West, Drovers, etc. It had barns, feed, water, and a fenced in barnyard for animal herds in transit.

Fairfields Dey Inn, also called Deys Hotel or Eagle Hotel on old county maps.
In later years the Tavern was replaced by a General Store, but I’m sure a Hotel Guest could acquire a few nips of ‘cider’ or medicinal tonic if self prescribed.

Roscoe DeBaun (FPL R 974.9 DE) remembered the Dey General Store this way:

The store was stocked with staple groceries, an old coffee grinder, bins for dried beans, peas and rice; kegs of salt mackerel, a cracker barrel, a sugar barrel and a molasses barrel with spigot (bring your own jug). Rope and small farm tools were on several shelves. Hanging from the ceiling were lanterns, pails, milk strainers, dish pans, clothes hampers, rat traps, muskrat traps and many other things.

The feature I remember best about Dey’s store was the candy counter. For one cent each, you could buy a big red and white birch candy pole, or a big soft pink candy that looked like a peeled banana, or a yard of black licorice string, or four chocolate almonds. Sweet Caporal cigarettes were five cents for a package of ten, but few were sold, as people considered cigarettes to be harmful. They really were more injurious then, than now, but they still are bad enough. I know, because I smoke them. However, that store was a revelation to me; I just could not understand how one person could know where everything was stored.

Roscoe DeBaun’s ‘Country Life in Fairfield 1887-1909’ is a treasure trove of memories.

Another time you could get a haircut there or pick up your mail as it was also Fairfield’s first Post Office pre-dating RFD. Innkeeper Samuel Dey was also Postmaster and the postmark was “Fairfield”. Back then, that meant a great deal to our small rural Community. Samuel Dey was also a Caldwell Freeholder and Caldwell Township Committeeman. He didn’t get pushed around by the Caldwell Village Committeemen who felt commercial interests greatly outweighed rural or farm interests. It was probably the old (and current) rant about whoever pays more taxes is entitled to the largest share of road improvement and education funds.

For example, the 1889 annual budget for Caldwell Township road improvement was $10,000 (for all of the Caldwells, Verona, Essex Fells, Fairfield, and Cedar Grove). Since many roads outside of Caldwell Village were prioritized by Samuel Dey he was challenged: “Where abouts is all this money to be spent Sam”? To which he mockingly responded: “Every cent of it will go right in front of my place if I can get it there”. Of course he wasn’t serious and was offended that his good judgment was being questioned by his critics. But after two more years of quibbling Caldwell Village used this issue (among others I’m sure) to secede from Caldwell Township. ‘Home rule’ already divided 6 N.J. Counties into 21 by 1857 and the 104 N.J. Townships established in 1798 now number 565 municipal entities. Essentially subdivision was going to happen no matter what Samuel Dey said or did. You can say: the ‘dey was cast’ :-)

:- ) almost like ‘manifest destiny’ was back then.
American Progress, (1872) by John Gast, is an allegorical representation of the modernization of the new west. Columbia, a personification of the United States, is shown leading civilization westward with the American settlers. She is shown bringing light from the East into the West, stringing telegraph wire, holding a school textbook that will instill knowledge, and highlights different stages of economic activity and evolving forms of transportation.

The Fairfield Post Office delivered it’s mail to the Erie Train Station in Caldwell via ‘Old Joe’ Kiersteads phaeton. By 11 o’clock he returned to Fairfield after narrowly escaping death from those nasty Caldwell potholes :- ) :- ) That was the time of day many folks visited the General Store, met with Neighbors, soaked up the latest news or gossip and traded recipes for ‘Guinea Hen Soup’.

Note : This is getting way too humorous for serious ‘history’. I need to look up the Pollio Family Motto: “Braccia rubate all’agricoltura” ( Literally : arms stolen from agricultural work ). { This phrase refers to someone who’s studying or doing some type of intellectual work, but doesn’t quite know what they’re doing. In other words, this person is better suited for farm work }. Sounds about right, huh? I should have stayed on the Family Farm and never pursued that B.A. in History from Bloomfield College!

Once more, the Inn added something new about 1900. A large room was converted into a school classroom because the public one room schoolhouses in Clinton and at the Fairfield Church were at capacity. A few years later ( 1905 ) the Board of Education was allocated $ 5,500. of Township funds to construct a large four room school on Fairfield Road. Then in 1927 it was expanded into eight large classrooms.
Fairfield’s first township-wide Elementary School on Fairfield Road. The first four classes began in 1907, with two student grade levels in each classroom.

The last significant changes to the Dey (pronounced ‘die’) Inn was the addition of a long closed-in wraparound porch. Even though the Inn was very well maintained, it was in the path of a major street intersection upgrade. Two Bridges Road and Little Falls Road were rerouted and joined with the ‘new’ Passaic Avenue ‘cut through’ (a term Grandmother Adelia Collerd used frequently for ‘new’ roads like the New Dutch Lane ‘cut through’ and the Sand Road ‘cut through’). This busy intersection required Township Constables to direct traffic there every Sunday after Church.

The last configuration of the Dey Inn before it fell victim to eminent domain. The original main section (R) is barely visible in this old photo.

* * * *

Another good article about: Dey Mansion

* * * *
Sometimes even the worst Historian stumbles upon a curiosity of little known fact. This is about Bergen Militia ‘General’ Richard Dey the son of Major, Colonel Theunis Dey who placed his Plantation into the service of General Washington (1780).

During Richards service under numerous Militia Commands, the war of Independence (1776-1777) was going very badly for the Patriots. New York City was lost, the Continental Forces were in full retreat, and Tories were frequently raiding virtually every suspected Patriot Farm or Village in Bergen County.

These were indeed the ‘times that try men’s souls’, and Richard was battle hardened by the time he retired from service. Many years later he inherited the Preakness Plantation (1787), sold it outside the Dey ( pronounced ‘die’ ) Family (1801), and then moved to a modest ‘Little Passaic Falls’ property of 33 acres.

**HEADLINE : TWO DEY OF HORSE ACCIDENT !**

Richard’s younger brother Philip died as a result of a horse accident August 2, 1810 ( I’ll nickname the horse André ). 14 months later, Richard was riding along Little Falls Road between Deepavaal Bridge and the Dey Inn. He died there of a horse accident also! The best part is that it was the same horse that I just nicknamed: André ! Sorry Richard: No Guinea Hen Soup for you!!

**NOTES:**

Of course I nicknamed the horse André because if there was any possibility of a ghost involved, John André would be the one haunting down Patriots.

André ‘s execution as a spy was not one of General Washington’s ‘finer moments’. Actually it was pretty disgraceful when you examine the story in full context and detail. For more see :

“Valiant ambition: George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and the fate of the American Revolution” ( FPL 973.3 PH )

If you’re interested in reading a gut wrenching account of how the Tories and British Troops terrorized Bergen County and how the Bergen Militia courageously fought back, see :

“The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley : The Jersey Dutch and the Neutral Ground, 1775-1783” ( FPL 974.9 LE )

Oh, and to make sure you read the above headline correctly, I inserted the proper pronunciation of Dey three times. :- ) :- ) :- ) Sorry, that must have been very annoying.

I also missed an opportunity to jest about the two Dey Generals with the ‘General Store’ of their distant cousins. Maybe in the next edition ?
These two great books are available at the Fairfield Library.

Dedicated to all the Fairfield Families of Huguenot ancestry, especially the Dey Family who fought so heroically during our war for independence.

“Braccia rubate all’agricoltura” ..........Paul Pollio  Feb. 2, 2019
Published in 2004, the *Encyclopedia of New Jersey* ( FPL R 974.9003 EN ) is a great reference book with over 3,000 original entries, 585 illustrations, and 130 maps. Despite it’s comprehensiveness, there’s something missing between ‘Horse’ and ‘Horseshoe Crab’ : **The Horseneck Riots.** ( Note: If you are not already familiar with the Horseneck Riots an introduction can be found here : Control + Click )

If we look at the Fairfield ( Essex County ) entry in the NJ Encyclopedia, we find the following from author Charles A. Poekel Jr. who published “*West Essex – Essex Fells, Fairfield, North Caldwell, and Roseland*” ( FPL 974.9 PO ) :

“One of Fairfield’s earliest settlers was Simon Van Ness, who in 1744 participated in the so-called Horseneck Riots, when Horseneck farmers stormed the Newark Jail and freed Samuel Baldwin, who had been incarcerated in a deed dispute with the East Jersey Proprietors.”

I don’t mean to pick on Mr. Poekel ( again ), but I doubt Simon Van Ness had anything to do with the Horseneck Riots. Certainly, like practically everyone else, Simon had property issues with the East Jersey Province Proprietors. Land disputes were innumerable and related rebellious behavior dated back over 70 years, but there is ample evidence to suggest that Simon was unlikely to participate in these riots.

Simon settled his land issues with the EJPP’s prior to the Horseneck disturbances. Many of such settlements had pledges or implied loyalty oaths to the Crown and Proprietors. My thought is Simon wouldn’t jeopardize his good standing with the EJPP by rioting against their interests.

You also have to consider Jersey Dutch vs. English Newarker insularity. Although neighbors were drawn closer by similar EJPP land disputes, they were culturally, socially, religiously, and linguistically isolated. This insularity was palpable. From 1652 to 1674 their respective homelands fought three Anglo-Dutch Wars and New Amsterdam ( NYC ) changed hands between the Dutch and English three times during this period. Even though 70 years in the past, the scars of distrust
survived for many generations. At the time of the first Horseneck Riot (1744), the local Dutch and English didn’t even speak the same language.

And lastly, Simon was 78 years old at the time. I could be wrong, but I can’t imagine him jaunting 32 miles roundtrip to Newark and back one evening. Possible, but not likely in my opinion.

I would take Jersey Dutch non-participation even further. 100 of the 101 Subscribers to the original Horseneck Tract negotiations had English surnames. All those arrested (36) had English surnames except for one Johannes Van Winkle. All but one of the Rioters who made the final capitulation to the EJPP had English surnames as well. Generally speaking, the Jersey Dutch may have been sympathetic to their Neighbors’ cause, but I’m guessing this may have been the extent of their involvement.

Please keep in mind that there is a difference between the Horseneck Section (or Region) of Essex County and the ‘Horseneck Tract’ of 13,500 acres that the 100 English (and 1 Dutch) subscribers purchased from the Indians in 1701. Fairfield land was a very small part of the 13,500 acre contested tract (see map below).

![Figure 1: The English Newarkers called this red line the ‘Dutch Line’, while the Jersey Dutch sometimes called it the ‘English Line’.](image-url)
Fairfield was mostly covered by a 1684 confirmed Proprietary deed to a Dutch Company at Acquackanonk (Passaic-Paterson-Clifton). Armchair historians often conflate the Horseneck Tract Indian Deed with the larger Horseneck Section of Essex County. Keep in mind there were several Indian land purchases in the Horseneck Section. Simon Van Ness and his eight partners had one and the Francisco Family claimed to have another. Also keep in mind that the Passaic River was not always used as a boundary in such deeds and land patents.

The ‘Dutch Line’ (Figure 1 above) was a ‘Horseneck Tract’ named boundary line running from Pine Brook to a point north of Cedar Grove (Singac). This line almost perfectly distinguishes the Passaic Valley from the foothills of Second Watchung Mountain. Thus it was not an arbitrary boundary and most of this valley was already purchased ‘of the heathen’ by the Jersey Dutch. The Horseneck Tract Indian Deed also excluded any lands already purchased of the ‘heathens.’

If you read Max K. Vorwerk’s Introduction link above, you’ll already know about Samuel Baldwin being arrested for cutting choice timber on land not legally deeded to him (his contemporary friends disputed this fact). This was in the Verona area, so geographically, Samuel Baldwin was not from today’s ‘West Essex’.

The back cover of Mr. Poekels illustrated “West Essex” book.

Once I read that Fairfield was the epicenter of the Riots. I’m guessing that was because our Horseneck Road runs through the old Horseneck Section and lasted much longer as a farming community. Otherwise, I can’t imagine how such a
New Jersey’s Proprietary land ownership can generally be divided into two eras. The first from 1674 to 1702 when the Proprietors held all lands and Government was split between the East Jersey and West Jersey Provinces. After 1702 until the Revolution the two Provincial Governments were united as a Royal Colony. Land ownership, however, remained with the Proprietors. A detailed and scholarly description of the earlier period was written by John E. Pomfret: *The Province of East Jersey 1609-1702, The Rebellious Proprietary* (FPL 974.9 PO).

As Professor Pomfret’s subtitle indicates, this was a Rebellious time in New Jersey that clearly dispels the myth that the Horseneck Riots (more than forty years later) were the ‘first successful resistance against British tyranny.’ If you need to see the several acts of resistance, conflict and disorder throughout the Colonies, they are among the many listed here: Conflicts in British America

One important law was passed in 1683 that forbade any treaties with the Indians without license from the Governor. To do so was a seditious act and subject to prosecution. Despite later claims to the contrary, this law was well known. As author David Lawrence Pierson described it in his 1917 ‘Narratives of Newark’: “The (HN) settlers were determined to act independently of the Proprietors.” And even after a 1702 law reinforced the 19 year old law and harsher penalties added “The settlers were not deterred by this mandatory act.”

To paraphrase Max K. Vorwerk’s conclusion that the Horseneck settlers were unlettered men, unfamiliar with legal terminology, and were taken advantage of
by shrewd and clever Proprietors, I cannot fully agree. Surely many settlers were just that, however it’s ludicrous to assume that 101 Subscribers with the means to buy 13,500 acres could be that collectively ignorant. In my view, it’s an easier argument to make that many Horseneck settlers were misguided by their Leaders. You’ll not read that one anywhere else! ( I guess my two lines of 10th generation Jersey Dutch are showing – huh ? :- ) :- )

“If the facts are against you, argue the law. If the law is against you, argue the facts. If the law and the facts are against you, pound the table and yell like hell”

Historian and Poet - Carl Sandburg ( 1878-1967 )

Another example of Horseneck Tract Rioter behavior was their collection of funds to send Representatives to London to argue their case. Tunis Speer owned 400-500 Horseneck Acres by both Indian and Proprietary title. He was approached by a HN Tract Rep who told him he had to give them £11 and four shillings to defray their costs. When he objected, he was told that they would dispossess him of his lands! At least that’s what Tunis told the Proprietors in an affidavit. If true, its pretty ironic that the HNT’ers were collecting taxes and making threats to owners of properly deeded property. ( I wonder if they requested funds from Simon Van Ness and others too ? )

Mr. Lynn G. Lockward devoted many pages to the Horseneck Riots in his “A Puritan Heritage, The First Presbyterian Church in Horse-Neck (Caldwell, N.J.)” (interlibrary: Caldwell 285.17 LOC or FPL reference 974.931 LO). Good detail but one paragraph in particular really tickled my historical funny bone:

“The underlying motives of the Dutch and Puritan settlers differed in that the former came primarily for commercial reasons, although they brought their church with them and were governed more or less by its precepts; whereas the latter came primarily to establish a church in accordance with their own concepts of scriptural teaching, but they also brought with them their shrewd and thrifty business acumen which has since characterized the New England Yankee.”

I found this hilarious. These Puritans were so shrewd with all of their thrifty business acumen - lost their cause, were legally humiliated, and paid the
Proprietors fully – one way or another. Some even had to post £100 bond for a three year probationary period. Thrifty business acumen indeed!

After reading my last few pages, the Horse Neck Founders Society presented me with their ‘Horseneck Trophy’ illustrated below:

Another conclusion that is often repeated is that the rebellious behavior and resulting settler bitterness foreshadowed Revolutionary War fervor some 30 years later. Maybe ‘rekindled’ would be a better word because the settlers depended upon British Troops to protect them during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). British troops not only helped the colonists to fight the war, but were stationed in the colonies for protection after the war. This welcomed dependency soothed over most of the prior land dispute hostilities. So there really wasn’t a direct path from the Horseneck Riots to the Revolution a generation later.

Britain needed money to support these troops, so Parliament decided to tax the American colonies accordingly. Beginning in 1764 many new laws were enacted and several new taxes were levied: the Sugar Act, Currency Act, Quartering Act, the Stamp Act, etc. As stated earlier, ‘rekindled’ old land dispute animosities would be a more appropriate statement.

There is a lot more to the story, and I encourage you to read further. Lynn G. Lockwards and John E. Pomfrets already mentioned books are both excellent. “A History of the Horseneck Riots” by Max K. Vorwerk (FPL Reference 974.9 VO) is a classic and well worth spending time in the Library to read it (plan an hour).
While Mr. Vorwerk’s 1948 Masters Thesis was the basis for his writing, a much more comprehensive PhD. type effort on Proprietary era disputes was written by Professor Brendan Mc Conville: “These Daring Disturbers of the Public Peace, The Struggle for Property and Power in Early New Jersey” (1999). This scholarly effort is important because it delves into the root causes of the HN conflict that date back nearly a century before. It provides the context, details, and perspective that force us to reevaluate the relative importance of the HN Riots in New Jersey’s pre-revolutionary history. It also details the bad behavior of the Proprietors that this article did not elaborate. Highly recommended.

Front cover of Mc Conville’s excellent book and a photo of the Horseneck Riots taken 80 years before photography was invented :- ) :- )

Sonny Curtis wrote the song “I fought the law” in 1958 that was covered by the Clash. (FPL CD Collection A CLA :- ) :- ) and a 2019 May Day gift idea. Have fun surrounding Tunis Speer with Horseneck Rioters demanding money. Just $17.46!
If the Horseneck Tract settlers had prevailed over the Proprietors, its likely we wouldn’t be reading about *horseshoe crabs* in the Encyclopedia of New Jersey.

The Encyclopedia of New Jersey (FPL R 974.9003 EN)

Dedicated to Tunis Speer and Fairfield’s Speer (Spier) Family. Jan and Hans Spier were two of Simon Van Ness’s eight land acquisition partners in 1701. One of the larger Speer Homesteads was on Fairfield Road running from the Horseneck Road intersection all the way to the Churchill School property. A great Fairfield Family.

...............Paul Pollio   March 1, 2019
Fairfield Historical Society: The “Horseneck Tract”

According to Wikipedia 2018 (and frequently read elsewhere):

“The Horseneck Tract was an area in present-day Essex County, New Jersey, United States, that consisted of what are now the municipalities of Caldwell, West Caldwell, North Caldwell, Fairfield, Verona, Cedar Grove, Essex Fells, Roseland, and portions of Livingston and West Orange.”

According to Sister Loretta Claire and Norman F. Brydon 1976*:

“(The Horseneck Tract included) All of Cedar Grove, the Caldwells, Verona, Essex Fells, and Roseland, and parts of West Orange, Livingston, and Fairfield.”

If you think that these two paragraphs essentially stated the same thing, you’ll need to read them again more carefully.

The second paragraph by Sister Loretta and Brydon is more accurate because it states that parts of Fairfield were inside the boundaries of the “Horseneck Tract”. It can be rightfully argued that Fairfield was part of the Horseneck Section of Essex County, but the “Tract” is almost always associated with the English Newarkers 14,000 acre purchase from the Indians in 1700 and precursor to the eventual “Horseneck (Land) Riots” of the 1740’s.

* * * * *

Excluding Fairfield, all the towns listed in the ‘Horseneck Tract’ total 14,000 acres. Fairfield is another 6,589 acres all by itself.

One of the ‘Horseneck Tract’ boundaries that is almost always overlooked is on the north side where a “straight line drawn from the mouth of the Pine Brook to a point just north of Cedar Grove (Singac)” . This is called the “Dutch Line” which virtually separates the Second Watchung Mountain foothills from the Passaic River Valley. This is consistent with prior ‘Jersey Dutch’ deeds and already established Fairfield settlements. I’ve never seen an illustration of this Dutch Line on a map, so I did my own ‘laundry marker’ rendition below:
The Northern “Dutch Line” Boundary of the Horseneck Tract

Another stipulation of the Indian Deed with the English Newarkers was that it only included lands ‘yet unpurchased from the Indians’. As already mentioned, the Fairfield Valley was already deeded by the Indians to the Jersey Dutch.

Much later in 1798 Fairfield and it’s ‘big bend’ of the Passaic River was merged into a newly formed “Caldwell Township” as established by the State of New Jersey. It’s likely that this consolidation 220 years ago contributed to the present day confusion.

So if someone jumps out from behind a tree and asks you “Was Fairfield part of the Horseneck Tract? - you’ll now be prepared with the answer : - ) : - ) : - )

...............Paul Pollio Nov. 6, 2018

* “Caldwell...1776-1976......Yesterday.......Today” Fairfield Public Library 974.9 CA
What a Ditch – The Deepavaal Brook Controversy 1844-1858

Along with Simon Van Ness in 1701 were his eight partners in the purchase of the Indian lands in or bordering present day Fairfield. These were the Clawson, Franson, Steinmets, Lowrentze, Vanderhoof, Peterse, and two Spier Families.

It’s a pretty safe bet that the prime farmlands were divided up into plots similar in size to Van Ness’ 300 acres. These large parcels were divided and re divided as the Frontier Families grew from generation to generation.

It might be hard to imagine, but four generations later Fairfield’s farmlands including the hay meadows virtually covered the entire township. The primary farmland corridor was along Fairfield Road with a large swampy meadow to its southeast. This is ‘Long Meadow’ almost a forgotten name compared to our better known Great Piece, Little Piece, and neighboring Hatfield and Troy Meadows.

Long Meadow runs about two miles from Clinton Road, along the airport property, to the rear of the Municipal Building property. This low meadow is fed by several brooks and streams primarily from North and West Caldwell. The Deeplavaal Brook is a natural stream that drains Long Meadow into the Passaic River at Pier Lane and Little Falls Road.

But this brook was made to Natures needs, and not to mans ever emerging needs. To improve the Townships overall drainage the Deeplavaal would need to be greatly increased in length, width, and depth. There were many obvious benefits to be realized. ‘Draining the flowed lands’, increasing cultivable farm acreage, and ‘relieving the people ………of sickness and diseases.’

Okay, now it’s time to put on your historical context goggles. Set them to 1844:
By 1844 we understood the breeding of mosquitoes in stagnant water. But we still did not know that these pests could transmit diseases like malaria and yellow fever. That discovery by Carlos J. Finlay, a Cuban Physician, was still 38 years away.

Back then we also generally adhered to the ‘miasma theory’ of disease that held that the origin of epidemics was due to a miasma, emanating from rotting organic matter, malodorous swamp gasses or ‘night air’. The germ theory eventually replaced the miasma theory some 35 years later. My point is that draining the lowlands in 1844 was perceived as a means of preventing disease. The swamps ‘infected the air’.

The term “No-Brainer” was still in the future by about 115 years, but why would local beneficiaries ever object to such a worthwhile project? You’re probably guessing it was a ‘money’ issue and that was a big part of it. There were virtually no Government funds for such rural projects in those days, only laws that assessed land owners in some supposedly equitable way. So all costs including administration were going to be charged back to the land owners. A duly appointed assessor would subjectively evaluate the benefit to each property and ultimately advise each individual’s fair share.

“The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help.” ………..Ronald Reagan

Even with your 1844 reality goggles you cannot imagine the full extent of the Yeoman Farmers concern, skepticism and suspicion. That’s because then current undertakings like the Morris Canal and Bloomfield Avenue Turnpike proved to be profit neutral and had to be infused with additional capital for unanticipated upgrades and maintenance.

But most importantly, such bonded projects were financed by investors who had cash to speculate with. Our Farmers were barely subsisting and money was very tight following the nations worst economic depression in the five years (1839-1844) immediately preceding these discussions.
There were no guarantees that such a ‘canal’ would provide the stated benefits so the proposal showed little progress for thirteen years. However, another 1844 drainage proposal was approved and implemented. This was the blasting out a channel in the traprock reef in Little Falls. While only one foot deep, twenty feet wide, and 100 long it appeared to provide immediate relief. The $1,000 of voluntary contributions seemed well worth the expense to protect Fairfield’s 2,000 ton annual hay crop. (This is NOT a typo – 2,000 tons!).

Later in 1858 the State finally approved the Deepavaal improvement plan. Several bids were considered and five sections identified. Bids were very similar with $0.16 per cubic yard of excavation, and $1.00 per cubic yard for any rock blasting.

An injunction was issued on behalf of a Claimant(s) on the Pine Brook end, and the Civil War diverted attention for a while. But eventually the “Big Ditch” project was completed as planned. One report indicated that the allocated assessment fees could be deducted from future property taxes.

One aspect I found humorous was a financing proposal that fees could be collected in three (easy?) payments: 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days! This sounded to me like a Ron Popeil ‘Chop-O-Matic’ infomercial 100 years in the future. I’m sure these Farmers would rather use their money for a new steel plow that was just perfected by John Deere.

Exactly when the project was completed is unclear. Much later in the 1930’s a WPA project was initiated to improve the Deepavaal Canal along with its bridge crossings. About this same time the small Curtavaal Canal along with its bridge crossings. About this same time the small Curtiss Airport was sold and greatly expanded by the Curtiss-Wright Corp. Dutch Lane was relocated as well as the Green Brook and the Deepavaal. Not major stream changes, but enough to allow full runway optimization of the new 275 acre airport. You know, about the size of one share of the Indian land purchase in 1701.
Original 1933 footprint of Curtiss-Wright Airport. Notice Old Dutch Lane and the Green Brook ‘Mill Stream’ running through the property. Both later relocated. The Jersey City pipeline is also shown running easterly through the new Airport.

Fairfield Reformed Church Minister Joseph Wilson served the Fairfield Community 1838 to 1845. He had nothing to do with the Deepavaal Brook. I just forgot to take off my 1844 historical context goggles!
One of the farms directly northwest of the old airport was owned by John Wisniewski. This Fairfield Road property was bought by my Family (Pollio) in 1941 and it was bordered at the narrow back end by the Deepavaal Brook. In the early 1960’s a severe drought brought our irrigation pond to an extremely low level, so we had a ditch dug about 300 feet to the Deepavaal. Even though it was only a trickle of a stream at times, it served our irrigation purposes for many years.

Our irrigation pond soon became a prime spawning habitat for carp as they took over the Deepavaal. Carp are frequently blamed for destroying the spawning habitat of other species, but this is only partially true. The carp can survive in turbid and polluted water better than most other species. Some of these fish in our irrigation pond were over 22 inches long.

When snowmobiling became popular we made a bridge over the “Big Ditch’. This involved felling two trees next to each other and nailing a deck of pallets on top of them. This allowed us to snowmobile onto the Airport and also the Mountain Ridge Golf Course nearby. We always avoided the putting greens on MRCC but they were not happy and had the West Caldwell Police looking for us. The Fairfield Police sometimes tried to catch us on the Airport too by driving up and
down the plowed runways with their lights flashing, but we politely waved to them and zipped away.

Deepavaal Brook, Canal, and ‘Big Ditch’ 2007

Dedicated to the many 19th Century ‘owners or possessors’ of Fairfield lands seized for the widening and extension of the Deepavaal Canal. And, later taxed for the benefits of drainage to their farms and properties.

..............Paul Pollio       October 16, 2018