

# Kingston Historian

Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society  
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## **Sunday, April 28, 2013. Rescheduled Withington Estate/ Heathcote Farm Tours**

Due to the many trees felled by tropical storm “Sandy” on the grounds of the Withington Estate/ Heathcote Farm, KHS had to cancel tours of the house and grounds last fall; however, these tours have been rescheduled for Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup> 2013.

Those who signed up for last fall’s tours have been given first chance for these tours; the tours are limited, but there are a few slots remaining. The tours are free and open to the general public. Parking is available on Brook Drive East or West and on Spruce Lane. You can sign up by contacting the KHS secretary at 609-223-3877 or by email at [KHSofNJ@gmail.com](mailto:KHSofNJ@gmail.com). Please give a contact name and a phone number.

Historian Clifford Zink, who spoke at our annual meeting last fall and is an expert on the Withington Estate, will conduct the tours. He knows the history of the building, as well as its extensive grounds. We are grateful to Clifford Zink and to owner David Sculley to be able to offer the tours.



Heathcote Farm as the Withington Estate in 1881

## **1913-2013 The Lincoln Highway and Princeton Nurseries**

**KHS celebrates two 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
events important to Kingston.**

Various groups are planning events and activities linked to these anniversaries. This June KHS will host two events related to the the Lincoln Highway, the first coast to coast highway.

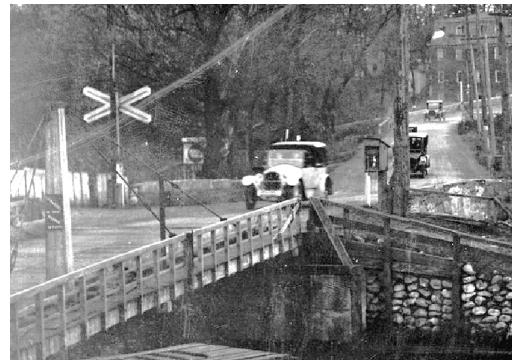


Photo detail showing cars on the D&R Canal bridge, Kingston (November 1921) taken by R.C. Maxwell Co., Trenton. From Duke University Digital Collections.

KHS will honor the 1913 beginning of the Princeton Nurseries with a talk by William Flemer IV in October and, starting this summer, an exhibit in the Lockett’s House on the development of this very important part of Kingston’s life and history.

### **“The Lincoln Highway”**

Join KHS for a talk by Barry Pavelec on **June 4, 2013 at 7:30 pm** at the Firehouse on Heathcote Road. Pavelec has done research and written on the Lincoln Highway – the first coast-to-coast road in the US.. His talk will focus on the creation of the road, its part in the national highway system and its

part in Kingston's history. The talk is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

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## **“Lincoln Highway Centennial Tour” will stop for lunch in Kingston on June 22, 2013.**

As part of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lincoln Highway up to a 100 cars will leave from both the East Coast and West Coast on June 22, 2013 for a conference in Kearny, Nebraska on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Drivers coming from the New York City area will stop for lunch at Kingston. The KHS is hosting this luncheon in partnership with Eno Terra and the NJ Lincoln Highway Association. Cars able to maintain 50 mph will be part of the tour. KHS plans to mark the Kingston part of the route with signs and to have antique cars in the area on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **A Little Lincoln Highway History**

Carl G. Fisher, wanted to show the nation the importance of hard roads for automobile use. After getting industry and car owner support, a route for a coast-to-coast road was announced in September, 1913 and dedicated by the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA) that October. The LHA raised funds to create this road, but realized it could not raise it all and needed Federal Government help. This came in time, but was delayed by WWI. The US Highway System was created in 1925. In 1928 with much fanfare the LHA declared the LH complete. 3,000 concrete markers were installed by Boy Scouts. For more details see: [www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/Lincoln.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/Lincoln.cfm) or put “Lincoln Highway history” in any search engine.

Between New Brunswick and Kingston the NJ route of the LH followed most of what is now Route 27. Marking for the route had begun on existing posts and poles, but not much road work started in 1913. The Middlesex Automobile Club wanted the LH route on what is now Route 1, but it needed too much work. Horace E. Fine, head of the NJ LH movement measured this route and found it 2 miles shorter, but Kingston remained on the route as noted by a local newspaper article dated 4/22/1917, “Advocate repair of Kingston Road: LH Committee declares roadbed in deplorable condition.”

The Kingston A-frame bridge at the D&R Canal became a bottleneck. It was replaced by a King-post

bridge over the canal completed by 2/29/1916.

## **KHS Holiday Open House returns to the Locktender's House**



KHS welcomed the community to its Holiday Open House and Tree Lighting this past December back at the Locktender's House. Thanks go to the D&R Canal State Park maintenance staff for repairing damage caused by Hurricane Irene. Volunteers from KHS and D&R Canal Watch painted the

repaired and renovated rooms on the ground floor. Decorations of seasonal greens by the Kingston Garden Club enlivened the rooms. Refreshments by KHS and the singing at the tree lighting by the Kingston Women's Chorus completed the holiday open house. Thanks to all!

### **New library in the Locktender's House**

KHS has created a Library in the Locktender's House for its archives and historic artifacts and also for the important materials donated by the Flemer family to Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands, which cover much of the history of Princeton Nurseries. Devon Weiss, a local Boy Scout from Troop 10, made a substantial contribution to the cataloging of many of these materials as his Eagle Scout award project. Devon was guided by KHS members Tom Jacoby, Ceil Leedom and others. A hearty thanks is well deserved.

### ***Spirit of the Jerseys State History Fair. Saturday, May 11, 2013. 11 am to 5 pm.***

The Kingston Historical Society along with the Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands and the Kingston Greenways Association will be together at the NJ State History Fair at Washington Crossing's State Park in Titusville. This year's theme of farming and agriculture in New Jersey fits in great

with our celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Princeton Nursery. This is an ideal place to promote their story. Page 2

## Louis Sincak, Kingston Legend

The Village of Kingston lost one of its most beloved residents in January. Lewis Sincak, known as “Lou,” lived in Kingston 74 of his 86 years. With his wife Byrdy, he raised two children here and, gave haircuts to four generations of men and boys from his Main Street barber shop for 66 years.

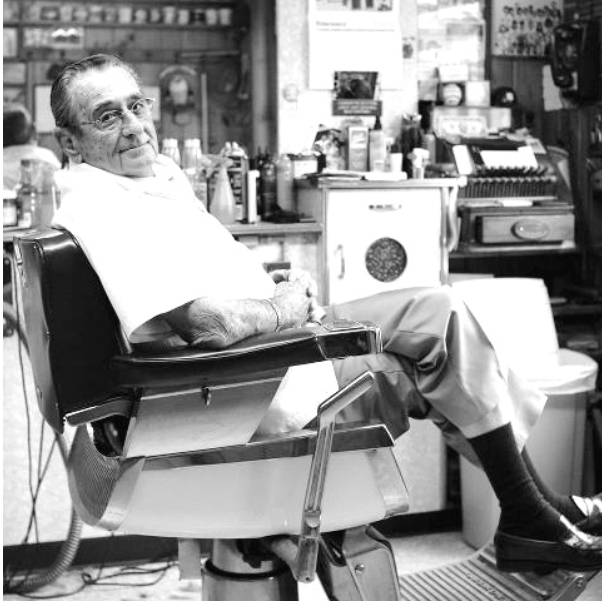


Photo by Frank DiGiovanni

Lewis Sincak wasn't born in Kingston, but he lived here most of his life and he loved it. He loved the people, he loved the community and he loved the sociability of being a barber. He once told someone that “I've got a lot of wonderful customers, so many it makes tears come to the eyes sometimes.” Evidence of the types of relationships Lou forged with his customers and neighbors are the decorations that covered nearly every square inch of barber shop's walls- photographs, shaving mugs, golf pencils and New York Yankee memorabilia.

Lou was born in Rocky Hill and moved to Kingston when he was 12 years old. He opened his barber shop in 1949 after returning home from service in the Navy during World War II. Raymond Wolf, then Postmaster of Kingston, gave Lou his first historic Kingston photograph, of his grandfather, J.S. Wolf the Bootmaker standing in front of his shop- the shop that eventually became Lou's barbershop. As soon as Lou had hung the photograph on his wall, customers began bringing Lou their own

photographs to add. This began the Sincak historic photograph collection.

Probably no single individual has contributed more to the Kingston Historical Society's (KHS) photograph collection than Lou Sincak. Lou's well-known barbershop on Main Street in the heart of Kingston was virtually a museum in itself, adorned with more than 100 historic photographs and prints depicting Kingston and her citizenry at various junctures in its history. When the KHS set out to develop its collection, Lou generously loaned his entire collection, photo by photo, to be digitally copied for preservation. He donated many photographs outright. Lou also began asking his regular customers if they had any photos of Kingston to donate or loan to the Historical Society. This resulted in another 100 additional negatives and slides donated by other friends and neighbors. Lou's inquires also uncovered copies of *The Kingston Record* from 1932 and *The Forum* from 1940, local newspapers published in Monmouth Junction by the South Brunswick Publishing Co. and edited by Robert Rey. The *Record* and *Forum* provide a fascinating glimpse into everyday life in Kingston, including everything from the Kingston Ball Club plans for 1932, the news of election campaigns, to marriage and birth announcements. For these contributions to the KHS Lou was awarded the prestigious Historical Contribution Award in 2001.

Lou and Byrdy Sincak have been fixtures in the village of Kingston since they married nearly 66 years ago. Many know Byrdy from her 23 years working at the Kingston Post Office. Both have always been involved in the community. Lou was a Mason and he and Byrdy were members of the Kingston Volunteer Fire Department and Ladies Auxiliary respectively. Both were members of over 50 years. Lou was a very warm and friendly man, always quick with a story or to tell you a joke. He loved to talk about the ups and downs of his beloved Yankees, about golf, and about happenings in and around the village. He loved Kingston and gave a lot to the community. We are grateful to all that Lou did for Kingston. He will be greatly missed.

By Anne Zeman

## Kingston History Exhibits at the Locktender's House

Unique exhibits of photographs, photo images and information on Kingston history can be seen at the Locktender's House, open weekends from April to October from 10 am to 6 pm. Topics coincide with KHS events in 2013. Featured will be the Withington Estate/ Heathcote Farm, the Lincoln Highway and Princeton Nurseries.

## Property Research Reveals some of Kingston's History

A study of properties in the Kingston Historic District has revealed some of the ownership history of these lots and buildings. At present, this research only covers Kingston properties in South Brunswick Township. Four significant areas on this part of Kingston give insight into their development.



The Union Line Hotel has a property trail that dates to the early 1800s. There are likely earlier records, but they have not been

located. An 1815 deed recorded in 1835 shows John & Margaret Gulick and Robert & Rebecca Bayles selling 2 equal shares for this (5.93 acres) and another 100 acre lot to William Gulick. William Gulick in turn in 1816 sold these shares in the two lots to Henry Gulick and Phineas Withington. After Phineas died, in 1834 heirs of Henry Gulick and Phineas Withington sold the 5.93 acre tract to John Van Tilburgh. John died in 1867 and this tract was sold to Theodore Titus, the then hotel keeper.

The Titus Hotel appears on an 1876 map. After Titus died in 1882, this lot was purchased by several owners until 1921 when it was purchased by Martin Max & Emma Riedel. They divided the property, keeping the Union Line separate, into 15 lots along the southeast side of Heathcote Road to the crest of the hill, including creating the western half of Euclid Avenue.

The other three areas of land are one, the **Withington Estate/Heathcote Farm** belonging previously to Phineas Withington, Elijah Stout and others. Then in 1850 the State of New Jersey purchase the Withington lands for a House of Refuge. After much planning and development the project proved too expensive and in 1852 Isaac Withington purchased his former lands with some additions and the land remained in that family until 1914 when it was purchased by Joseph Garneau. He soon died and in 1926 this property was bought by Thomas G. and Grace Bigelow Cook. Since 1926 the acreage of these lands increased and then receded with development trends in the area.

The second area known as the **Heathcote Homestead Association in Kingston, New Jersey, 1874** was located by the railroad that crossed Ridge Road into Kingston and Rocky Hill. In 1874 this land was sold by Abram S. Meyrick. Lots were sold to various owners, but much of it was owned by Joseph A. Merrill, a Civil War veteran. This land, more recently owned by the Princeton Nursery, is now in the process of redevelopment. The area includes restored nursery houses and new dwellings.

The third area was developed by the **Kingston Land Association at Kingston, 1881**. This tract of land ran from the Union Line property south to Mapleton Road and down to now Ridge Road and up by Prospect Street and creating the southeastern end of Euclid Avenue. Charles B. Robison purchased the land in a Sheriff's sale and then assigned it to the KLA. Other names related to properties here are Charles B. Moore, other Moores and the Bastedos. This deed in 1881 notes the land was previously owned by Samuel Van Tilburgh.

## 2013 Kingston Historical Society Officers

President – Robert von Zumbusch, Vice-President – George Luck, Treasurer – Tom Jacoby, Secretary – Ceil Leedom.

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Interest in the past, present and future of Kingston is encouraged. Join us in these endeavors.

Membership in and support of the Kingston  
Historical Society is welcomed.