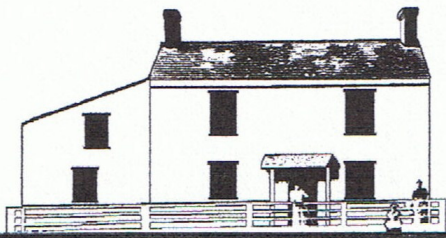


# Kingston Historian



Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society

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April 2013

## **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 Estates/ Heathcote Farm, the KHS had to cancel tours of the house and grounds last fall. However, these tours have been rescheduled for Sunday, April 26, 2013.

Those who signed up for last fall’s tours have been given first chance to reschedule their tours. Tours are limited, but there are few slots remaining. The tours are free and open to the 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 building history, as well as its extensive landscape history. We are grateful to Clifford Zink and to owner David Scully to be able to offer the tours.



Heathcote Farm as the Withington Estate in 1881.

## **1913-2013**

## **The Lincoln Highway and The Princeton Nursery**

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

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

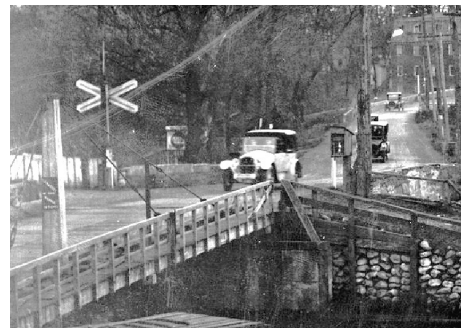


Photo detail showing cars on the D&R Canal bridge, Kingston. (November 1921). Taken by R.C. Maxell Co., Trenton. From Duke University Digital Collections.

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 Locktender’s House on the development of this very important part of Kingston’s life and history.

### **“The Lincoln Highway”**

Join us for a talk by Barry Pavelec on **June 4, 2013 at 7:30 pm** at the Firehouse on Heathcote Road. Pavelec of Kingston 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.

## **KHS Hosting Luncheon for 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary “Lincoln Highway Centennial Tour” 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 (surfaced) 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 they 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 now Route 1, but too much work was needed. Horace E. Fine, head of the NJ LH movement measured this route and found it 2 miles shorter, but Kingston remained on the route noted by a local newspaper article of April 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 Feb. 29, 1916.

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

The KHS welcomed the community to its Holiday



Open House and Tree Lighting this past December returning to the Locktender’s House. Thanks go to the D&R Canal State Park maintenance staff for repairing damage caused by Hurricane Irene. The freshly painted walls by D&R staff, KHS and D&R Canal Watch members along with the newly

reconfigured kitchen and bathroom areas were admired. Decorations of seasonal greens provided by the Kingston Garden Club, KHS refreshments, and music by the Kingston Women’s Chorus at the tree lighting completed the holiday open house.

### **New library in the Locktender’s House.**

KHS has provided space for a library in the Locktender’s House for its archives and historical artifacts and, also, for important materials donated by the Flemer family to Friends of Princeton Nursery Lands, which cover much of the history of the Princeton Nurseries. Devon Weiss, of Boy Scout Troop 10, made a substantial contribution to cataloging many of these materials as his Eagle Scout award project. He adapted donated shelving to hold many of these items. Devon was guided by KHS and FPNL member Tom Jacoby and others.

### ***Spirit of the Jersey’s 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 nicely with our celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Princeton Nursery. This is an ideal place to promote their story.

## 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 for 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.

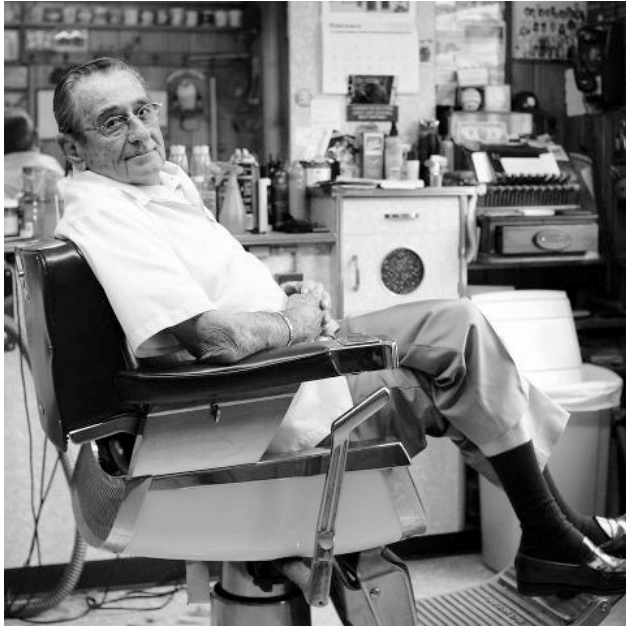


Photo by Frank Digiovanni.

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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 the 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. Thus began the Sincak historic photograph collection.

Probably no single individual has contributed more to the Kingston Historical Society's (KHS) 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 for 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.

## ***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 most weekends from April to October from 10 am to 6 pm. Topics coincide with KHS events in 2013. Featured will be 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 earlier records, but they have not been located. An 1815

deed recorded in 1835 shows John & Margaret Gulick and Robert & Rebecca Bayles selling two equal shares for 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 VanTilburgh. After John died in 1867, this tract was sold to Theodore Titus, then the hotelkeeper.

The Titus Hotel appears on an 1876 map. After Titus died in 1882, this lot was purchased by several different 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 down to the crest of the hill. This change included the extension of Euclid Avenue to Heathcote Road.

The other three areas of land are one, the **Withington Estate** belonging previously to Phineas

Withington, Elijah Stout and others. In 1850, the State of New Jersey purchased these lands for a "House of Refuge" for wayward boys. After much planning and development, the State then abandoned this costly project. In 1852, Isaac Withington bought back his former lands. Renamed the Heathcote Farm, the house and lands remained in the family until 1914 when it was sold to Joseph Garneau. In 1926, Grace Bigelow Cook, wife of Thomas Cook, purchased the estate. The Withington Estate/ Heathcote Farm remains in the Cook family.

The second area known as the **Heathcote Homestead Association in Kingston** was located by the railroad that crossed Ridge Road into Kingston and Rocky Hill. Abram S. Meyrick sold land for this development to the HHA in 1874. The 37 lots were sold to various owners including Joseph A. Merrill, a Civil War veteran. This land recently owned by the Princeton Nurseries and now by others is being redeveloped. If you haven't seen how this area is changing, you will be in for a pleasant surprise.

The third area was developed by the **Kingston Land Association**. This tract of land ran from the Union Line property line along Main Street to Mapleton Road and down to Ridge Road and up the west side of the Prospect Street lots. It created the southeastern end of Euclid Avenue. In 1881, Charles B. Robison purchased this land, formerly owned by Samuel VanTilburgh at a Sheriff's sale. Robison then turned this tract over to the KLA. Charles B. Moore and William Bastedo were some of the local residents associated with this land.

### **2013 Kingston Historical Society Officers**

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

Contact Information:

**Kingston Historical Society**

P.O. Box 323

Kingston, New Jersey 08528-0323

**Email Address: [KHSofNJ@gmail.com](mailto:KHSofNJ@gmail.com)**

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.

