



TRENTON IN BYGONE DAYS

By John J. Cleary

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Having an errand on Cooper Street below Market a few days ago, I took a look around and surveyed a neighborhood that was once quite familiar. Pretty much all the old residents have removed to other sections or have passed from life. I chanced, however, to meet Lewis Smith and learned to my surprise that he still occupies the old family home at No. 151. It was erected by his father, William H. Smith, about sixty years ago, together with several other comfortable dwellings of brick in the immediate neighborhood. William H. Smith was a prosperous newsdealer, dividing the morning newspaper routes with George Fitzgeorge, one covering the territory north of the creek and the other serving all of South Trenton. They were both very agreeable, dependable gentlemen, both of English birth and both residents of the Third Ward. Mr. Smith's two sons, Frank and Lewis, as boys, helped out with delivery of the old True American and the State Gazette and when they grew up established independent routes of their own.

Smith, Sr., showed his enterprise by developing Cosey Place, a small artery of travel and snug homes which runs between Cooper and Lambertson Streets immediately north of the, Pennsylvania Railroad.

Is Lewis Smith the only one of the old-time residents of Cooper Street still remaining? Not quite. The Mitchell family settled there before the arrival of the Smiths, I think, and two members of the second generation, the estimable Misses' Mary and Jane Mitchell, are still occupants of the old homestead, near Market Street.

Among those whom I remember on Cooper Street in the long ago were the Ruhlman's, the pioneer being Professor Rudolph Ruhlman of local band fame. His house was on the west side of the street. His two sons, John and Fred, also became professional musicians. Cassel R., a grandson, is a lawyer but is a resident elsewhere than on Cooper Street.

The Crawford family, was also prominent, living across the way from the Ruhlman's. Thomas Crawford, Sr., was a blacksmith originally but late in life became an undertaker and was succeeded in his business by several of his numerous boys.

Who recalls "Jerry" Kelly, Who preceded Mr. Crawford as an undertaker and who was also an upholsterer and lived opposite the rear of old St. John's Church? It was my proud privilege after funerals to ride one of "Jerry's" horses back to the livery stable from which it was hired.

The children who attended St. John's parish school entered from Cooper Street and enlivened the neighborhood before and after school hours. Besides the classrooms in the basement of St John's Church for boys and girls, a frame one-room stove-heated structure had been raised a short distance north of the church, which accomodated the older boys under care of a master until St. John's School on Lamberton Street was opened. I once told the story of this ancient school and the teachers who presided within its walls, those old-time pedagogues finding it by no means easy to maintain discipline over a sturdy mischievous bunch of halfgrown youths. Maybe we will return to the subject on some later occasion, recalling snowball fights, stone fights and other episodes which not infrequently marked the finish of a day's schooling. Uptown and downtown pupils constituted two formidable battle-lines.



Catholic Boys' School on Cooper Street

This snap-shot was taken after the building had been abandoned in the 70's—The entrance does not appear, its location having been within the little yard on the left side of the structure.

The late William J. Convery resided for some years on Cooper Street near Market and the Haney family of which City Clerk Haney is a representative were well-known residents. Dr. John J. Haney of the third generation of his family now occupies the former Ruhlman residence. I have been told that Colonel Mahlon Margerum, as a young man, lived in the same vicinity. John J. Miller, a crockery dealer, father of a well-known North Broad Street jeweler of later years, resided near the junction with Centre Street as did the Knorr family, prominent in the local printing business, and the family of "Billy" Kuhns, also active in the same business, who died not long ago.

John Dunphy kept a small grocery store near Centre Street; two of his sons became priests and a daughter joined the Sisters of Charity. Fred Overton, long active in city politics, resided near the Dunphys.

A fact forgotten doubtless by most people is that there was for some time a small public school on the east side of Cooper Street near Centre. Who can recall the teacher or teachers and are there any of the old pupils still in the flesh? The school building, I think, was rented temporarily by the city school board.

My memory goes back to the time when practically all the space from Market Street to Dunphy's store was a field only partly cultivated. The boys from Lamberton Street direction used the field as a short cut hurrying to St. John's School when the master leaned out of a window and tinkled his little his little summoning bell.

Dear Dr. Cleary –

Commenting on your allusion in the Sunday Times-Advertiser of July 7 to the "dove cote" in old Lamberton and its connection with the Bonaparte – Ann Savage romance, (also known as Mrs. Holton), I will once again try to throw some light on the old story obtained from gossip and rumor gleaned years ago when I was a younger man than I am at present writing. There may be some old residents of the Sixth Ward who may be able to set the matter straight (if I am wrong), should they wish to do so. The story that came to me was that Joseph Bonaparte established his Quaker charmer in a large house on the river bluff in Lamberton, known as Pine Grove, with spacious grounds, the house set in the centre of a grove of towering pines. The trees were cut down and the house razed when the property was purchased by the Riverview Cemetery and included in the cemetery property. Several years before its destruction, being interested in its history, I explored the old house from top to bottom, from room to room and rebuilt in my romantic mind's eye happenings that the rooms had witnessed in the long ago. Desolation and decay met my eyes in every direction and the wallswere mute as to the secrets that might have told of those who had lived within them. It had been said that Ann Savage became Joseph's chere amie much against her will and that she was very unhappy while living at Bow Hill, the first place of domicile after leaving Philadelphia. The Pine Grove residence on the banks of the Delaware in Lamberton was chosen as her new home to cure the blues. That Ann had her good parts is shown by the pathetic lines graven on the stone monument in St. Michael's church yard

marking the spot where her little daughter lies, proving that if she was an erring woman, she was at least a loving mother.

Strange how the shadow of Napoleon Bonaparte reached across the Atlantic in the persons of his brothers, Joseph and Jerome, who were fated to leave descendants upon our shores. Joseph was quite prodigal in bestowing his ardent affection on the fair, if frail beauties of his times, as there were other women besides Ann Savage who presented him testimonials of their regard. His brother, Jerome, was legally married according to United States laws, to Nancy Patterson, of Baltimore, which Napoleon repudiated and had annulled before he elevated him to the throne of Westphalia, providing Jerome with a royal spouse. Prince Murat who came here with his Uncle Joseph married a Bordentown school mistress by whom he had several children and strange to record, he returned to France to bask in the reflected glories of the Emperor. To wind up the tale, I know a little something of the reason why Joseph's inamorata vacated the Pine Grove house for a smaller one further up the street. The story that was told me ran, that when the breakup occurred Joseph purchased the small house as more suitable to her needs, being less expensive to care for than the larger mansion. He also presented her with a sum of money, generous in amount which he had his man of business invest for her. Ann lived in this house with her second daughter until she married a man living in upper New York State.

The narrator further stated that the daughter who married a Trenton doctor, received the house as a present from her mother and that the doctor and his wife lived there until cut down by the Grim Reaper. Joseph, ex-King of Naples and of Spain, also provided for other ladies of his acquaintance who presented him with tokens of their affection during his sojourn with us, which proves again that some Don Juan's can also be gentlemen in observing the little niceties of life. All of the actors of this drama have been dust these many years, so their feelings will not be lacerated by the portrayal of their weaknesses or virtues, the grave having covered their joys and sorrows, but there will be other writers besides myself, who will put pen to paper and relate other stories, real or imaginary of the romantic Bordentowner, Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon the Great.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE N. THOMAS