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*Old Shrewsbury Map Discovered & Interpreted*

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*The Shrewsbury Historical Society recently discovered a fragile old map of Shrewsbury, dated 1849. Hand-drawn, it showed houses, churches, and waterways in the township almost 75 years before the incorporation of the current borough. Why was the crumbling map drawn, and by whom? Is it important; worthy of preservation? Read on to see what has been discovered thus far.*

A few years ago, Don and Mary Lea Burden, President and Treasurer of the Shrewsbury Historical Society (SHS), were sorting through the hundreds of documents and artifacts in the Society’s Museum. Most everything there was collected and assembled by the late J. Louise Jost, who apparently never missed a print mention of Shrewsbury anywhere. Searching through a dusty museum closet, the Burdens unrolled a fragile old map of Shrewsbury, dated 1849. Hand-drawn, it showed houses, churches, and waterways in the township almost 75 years before the incorporation of the current borough.

SHS member Rick Geffken first thought the map may have had something to do with the creation of Ocean County in 1850, when that county was lopped off of southern Monmouth County. Or, possibly, it was created to outline new boundaries when Ocean Township was separated from Shrewsbury in 1849. Intriguingly, the initials “BWC” on the map might be a clue to its creator. Geffken joined Don Burden (who also happens to be the Mayor of Shrewsbury) and
the map on a trip to the offices of the Monmouth County archivist Gary Saretzky in Manalapan. Saretzky suggested that the map was indeed unique and he recommended that the famed Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia assess it.

Burden and Geffken traveled to the Conservation Center in February 2018 to bring the map for evaluation. The expert team there will soon provide the SHS with an estimate of conservation costs, for which Burden hopes future grant money can be obtained. SHS also believes reproductions of this important map might be sold to recoup costs. In any event, the project of map conservation and research into its contextual history, if it does go ahead, could take up to a year. For now, SHS awaits their estimate.
So what *is* known about the map at this time? The map encompasses an area from the Navesink River at its top or northern part to the Shark River at its southern. The western boundaries are Freehold and Howell; the eastern, the Atlantic Ocean. The inscriptions on “A Map of the Township of Shrewsbury” indicate it was drawn in “January 1849” by someone with the initials “BWC.” Black ink was used for town names, buildings, streams, etc.

Pencil notations, to include the words “present line” and “proposed line” written between Shrewsbury Town (centered on the Four Corners) and Eatontown (incorporated in 1873\(^1\)), strongly

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\(^1\) Eatontown was incorporated as a township on April 4, 1873. Before its incorporation, Eatontown was a part of Shrewsbury and Ocean Townships. Named for an early gristmill operator Thomas Eaton (1654-1688), it was settled as Eatontown Village in 1730.
indicate the map was created to show demarcations between these municipalities. The Township of Ocean was created by an act of the New Jersey Legislature on February 21, 1849, from portions of Shrewsbury Township, at which time the newly formed township stretched from the Shrewsbury River to the southern tip of Avon-by-the-Sea. This comports with the scope of the map.

The top of the map is rolled onto a black-painted dowel, attached by brads, and its bottom is attached to a black L-shaped piece of corner molding. The map was likely used for presentations to public audiences, possibly to the New Jersey Legislature itself, illustrating the proposed separation of Shrewsbury and Ocean Township.

Why was Shrewsbury Township broken up in the mid-19th century? According to Township of Ocean League of Women Voters,

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By the middle of the 19th century, eastern Monmouth County had outgrown its single township government. The burgeoning populations and developing businesses of the lands incorporated into Shrewsbury a century and a half before required government more responsive to local needs. It included all lands from Sea Bright south to the Shark River and west to encompass Eatontown and Neptune. Growth and development continued. Communities within the incorporated boundaries of the Township of Ocean themselves began to require more parochial representation.

Now, who drew the map? The Monmouth County Historical Association, headquartered at 70 Court Street in Freehold, was incorporated in 1898 to “discover, procure, preserve and perpetuate whatever relates to the history of Monmouth County.” Its museum collections include many old maps, one of which is a “traced copy” of the 1849 map under examination. Two inscriptions on the tracing attribute the map to two different surveyors: Britton W. Corlies in 1843, and Benjamin W. Corlies in 1849. The latter inscription (below, right) appears older. Britton W. Corlies (1789-1840) and Benjamin W. Corlies (1797-1884) were brothers. Since Britton W. Corlies died before the creation of this map in 1849, he could not have drawn it. That inscription must be a mistake. Can we prove that Benjamin Woolley Corlies drew the map?

Benjamin W. Corlies inherited Eatontown property as per his father’s April 17, 1811 will (Britton Corlies, Sr. died in Oct 1816). We have maps and references confirming B. W. Corlies living in Eatontown: the Lightfoot map of 1851 (below, left); the F.W. Beers map of 1873 (below, right). We also have Corlies family information in genealogical records.

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3 Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of NJ, Calendar of Wills, Volume XIII, 98.
4 The Shark River District, Monmouth County, NJ and Genealogies of Chambers, Corlies, Drummond, Morris, Potter, Shafto, Webley, and White (Asbury Park, NJ: George C. Martin, 1914), 57.
Benjamin W. Corlies is mentioned in numerous Monmouth County documents during his lifetime. For example, he was appointed Trustee of his cousin George Corlies’s (1749-1817) estate in 1837\(^5\); in 1846 he was appointed Guardian of his cousin Edward Pennington Corlies.\(^6\) He was elected one of the Vice-Presidents of the Monmouth County Agricultural Society in 1853.\(^7\) Curiously, no images or pictures of Benjamin W. Corlies have been found.

The first U.S. Federal Census with Benjamin W. Corlies family details was 1850, which shows them living in Ocean Township.\(^8\) A “Farmer” with property valued at $20,000, he was quite prosperous for the time. Subsequent Census records for 1870 and 1880 also list Corlies as a farmer.

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\(^5\) Acts of the 61\(^{st}\) General Assembly of NJ, Trenton, 1837, 90.
\(^6\) Intestates and Others from the Orphans Court Books of Monmouth Co., N.J, 1785-1906, Judith Cronk, Baltimore MD, 2002, 73.
\(^7\) History of Monmouth County NJ (Philadelphia: Franklin Ellis, 1885), 365.
\(^8\) 1850 U.S. Federal Census, August 26, 1850, 64.
Genealogical information\(^9\) (below) provides more details of his life, including mention of the 50\(^{th}\) Wedding Anniversary celebration he shared with his wife Miriam (Tilton) in 1870. The certificate\(^10\) memorializing the occasion, a Quaker tradition, is now at the Monmouth County Historical Association (seen on the next page of this article).

\(^9\) Monmouth County Historical Association collections.
\(^10\) Ibid.
Golden Wedding.

To my sweet husband and me, this is a golden wedding day. Our love for each other has grown stronger year by year. We have been married for 50 years, and our bond has only deepened with time.

This is the day we renewed our vows, to commit to each other for another 50 years. It is a day of joy and celebration, marking the beginning of a new chapter in our lives.

These words were written by me, expressing my love for him and the memories we have shared over the years. May our love continue to grow stronger as we face the challenges of life together.

[Signature]

[Date]
Six months before he died, perhaps in failing health, Benjamin W. Corlies sold his estate on “the south side of the Eatontown and Sea Shore Turnpike (Broadway)” to Mathew Byrnes in November 1883. Corlies likely retained some other real estate to which he moved.

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11 Monmouth County Clerk Records, Deed Book 380, 17.
When Benjamin W. Corlies died of a stroke in May 1884 his obituary\(^\text{12}\) (right) incorrectly listed his middle initial as “J.” His wife of fifty-six years, Miriam T. Corlies, predeceased him in 1876. Five of their children were living when Benjamin died. Before his death, the life-long Quaker was an Elder in the Shrewsbury Friends’ Meeting.\(^\text{13}\)

Benjamin W. Corlies’s Last Will & Testament is dated February 13, 1882.\(^\text{14}\) In it, he bequeaths money and other valuables to his children. No specific mention is made of how he wished to dispose of his real estate, which may be why court-appointed Administrators divided his remaining real estate among his heirs in November 1888.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{12}\) *Red Bank Register*, May 28, 1884.

\(^{13}\) *Friends’ Intelligencer*, Vol. XLI, Philadelphia, 1884, 250.


\(^{15}\) Monmouth County Surrogates Office map, Case #61-9, Filed January 8, 1890.
Where is the proof that Benjamin W. Corlies drew the 1849 map? The 1880 U.S. Federal Census lists Francis Corlies\(^{16}\) (Benjamin W. Corlies’s fourth child) as a “Surveyor.” Could this be a case of “Like father, like son?”

As shown previously in the Monmouth County Historical Association genealogical records, Francis Corlies died in 1897. His obituary\(^{17}\) reveals what just might be the final proof we need:

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\(^{17}\) Red Bank Register, April 28, 1897.
As you can see, it notes that Benjamin W. Corlies was “one of the foremost surveyors of Monmouth County in his day.” Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the “BWC” initials on the January 1849 map refer to Benjamin W. Corlies, who presumably drew it to illustrate the separation of Ocean Township from Shrewsbury Township.

The SHS looks forward to continuing to investigate this map, to hearing from the conservators about the preservation path forward, and, possibly, to making copies accessible for those interested. Stay tuned!

Rick Geffken is an archival historian retired from careers in the computer industry and teaching. He is a member of the Shrewsbury Historical Society as well as the Monmouth County Historical Association. Rick is the former publisher of “The Monmouth Connection,” the newsletter of the Monmouth County Genealogy Society. Historical and genealogical articles he's written have been published in The Howell Times, the on-line Patch blogs, “The Crown” newsletter of Christ Episcopal Church in Shrewsbury, and in many other publications. Rick is a well-regarded speaker at many local and state-wide historical societies and preservation conferences. His most recent book for Arcadia Publishing is Lost Amusement Parks of the North Jersey Shore, widely acclaimed during his current book tour.