

## Pearsonville Church Graveyard One of County's Historic Shrines

By Miriam Morris

WHITE HORSE, Jan. 14.—In the rear of the grounds of Pearsonville M. E. Church and adjoining Colonial Cemetery at White Horse is one of the oldest burial grounds in this section. In this burial ground in the year 1704 were laid the remains of the earliest settler of this section, Robert Pearson, who emigrated from England in 1681. A visit to the old graveyard has prompted the writer to review the histories of Trenton and nearby towns published in the Trenton Times in 1929 when Trenton celebrated its 250th anniversary and nowhere is there a record of any settlements having been made before Robert Pearson came up the Delaware River and settled on the banks of Crosswicks Creek between what are now White Horse and Lakeside Park.

In 1715 Katrin Pearson, wife of Robert, was buried beside her husband. Before the 18th century had drawn to a close the family burial ground had received a large number of the Pearson progeny. Markers bore such names as Douglas, Coar, Cubberley, Quigley and West. During the next century there were added to the tombs those bearing names of other Pearsons, Lowe, Voorhees, Cubberley and Hopkinson.

It is to Mary M. Hopkinson, wife of Thomas M. Hopkinson and daughter of William Pearson, great-great-grandson of the Robert Pearson who died in 1704 that Pearsonville M. E. Church owes its existence. Having sold the property immediately surrounding the family burial ground, and being desirous to contribute to the glory of God and the welfare of man, and anxious to protect effectually from desecration the burial place of her ancestors, Mary M. Pearson Hopkinson gave to the Methodist Episcopal Church a deed for about two acres of land. With the aid of her family connections and a few friends, she also contributed one-half of the cost of the church building erected thereon.

Near the graves of Robert Pearson and his wife, Katrin, is the resting place of their great-great-granddaughter, Mary Hopkinson who before

her death, June 28, 1859, in the 59th year of her age, made provision for perpetual care of the spot sacred to her. Beside the grave of Katrin Pearson is that of her daughter, Grace, wife of William Douglas, departed this life in 1781, at the age of 26. Doubtless this Grace Douglas was the mother of Douglas at whose home Washington was entertained during the Revolution.

Quaint are the sentimental inscriptions many of which are scarcely legible on the weather worn stones. Of Elizabeth, wife of Richard Hunt, departed this life in 1852 at the age of 94 is inscribed:

"Afflictions sore long time she bore  
Physicians were in vain  
Until the Lord did call her home  
And ease her from her pain."

The marker of Joseph Pearson who at the age of 10 years died in 1775, bears the lines:

"Oh, then in pity ease his wounded  
breast  
And let him sink in instant death  
to rest."

Joseph was one of seven brothers and sisters laid to rest beside their father, Robert Pearson, who died in 1820 and their mother, Mary Pearson, who passed away in 1798.

One small stone bears the simple inscription: "1754—L. Cubberley."

Only few persons were laid to rest in the old burial ground later than 1850. Joseph L. West who was born in 1798 was buried here in 1876. His wife, Ann Pearson West, born in 1804 died in 1836. Beside them lies their son who died at the age of six years in 1842.

Among the inscriptions that are legible can be found three marking the resting place of men bearing the name Robert Pearson. The pioneer, Robert Pearson, was the first to be buried in the sacred plot. Robert Pearson, Esq., died in 1753 at the age of 67 years, two months and 10 days. Beside him lie his two wives, Elizabeth, who died in 1722, at the age of 36 years, and Mary, who at the age of 71, died in 1771. The other Robert Pearson was he who departed this life in 1820. History tells that he was the father of 18 children, 10 borne by his wife, Elizabeth, and eight borne by his second wife, Grace

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Earliest Settler Buried in White Horse Cemetery



In a remarkably good state of preservation after 230 years are the tombstones of Robert Pearson, the earliest settler in this section, and of his wife, Katrin Pearson, in the rear of the grounds of the Pearsonville M. E. Church, adjoining Colonial Cemetery at White Horse. The sharply defined engraving on the stones, with no marks or obliterations to betray its great age, relates that the settler came from England in 1681 and was buried in 1704.

The youngest of these children, Theodosia, married Abraham Hunt, and she became the mother of 18 children.

These are only a few of the links that connect this nearby, and almost overlooked resting place, to some of the most important events in local history. The old burial ground is rightfully one of the county's historic shrines. At present the house built by Robert Pearson II near the site of the small house occupied by him is being torn down by the city of Bordentown on whose property it is located.