

**MISS LIZZIE PRICE ON
EARLY NORTHFIELD**

by

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edited by

JOSEPHINE DISTEFANO KAPUS

NUMBER THREE

**(In a series of monographs on the
history of Northfield)**

APRIL 1976

**PUBLISHED AND PAID FOR BY
THE NORTHFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

Third Printing

April 1998

FOREWORD

Collections of material which would further education and morals have been found in many places: the largest cities, university centers, churches and libraries. The first library in America supported by local taxes was established in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833.

By 1890 public library services had become commonplace enough for government at the state level to assume responsibility for continuing, improving and expanding such services for everyone. Northfield's library first opened on August 11, 1926. Old records show that the first librarian, Miss Lizzie Price, looked after 100 books which circulated 4,000 times among 2,400 residents. No one doubts the "good" of developing a public library, but its usage is the measure of a good library.

"Miss Lizzie" talked about early Northfield, then Bakersville, with Mrs. Sarah Ewing, a local historian, and these interviews preserved an oral account of its early history. In the spirit of America's bicentennial year and in celebration of the library's golden anniversary, the Board of Trustees welcomes this opportunity to recall and to record for the future Miss Lizzie's recollections.

Doris G. Mohn
Board of Trustees
President, 1970-1975

EARLY NORTHFIELD

On February 7, 1837, an act was passed creating Atlantic County from Gloucester County which at that time extended from the Delaware to the sea and included what is now Camden, Atlantic and Gloucester Counties.

The first public road in Atlantic County, the original Shore Road, was resurveyed in 1731 and moved a little east of its former location as the ground was drier and made travelling easier. Older settlements along this road were Absecon, Smiths Landing, Leedsville, Bargaintown and Somers Point. Some of the names of the early settlers in this vicinity were Adams, Somers, Steelman, Price, Ireland, Lake, Risley, Tilton and Baker.

Bakersville, one of the later settlements along this part of Shore Road, was so named after Miss Lizzie Price's great-grandfather, Daniel Baker, Adamstown, named after the Adams family, was another later settlement and included the section around Mount Pleasant Church in Pleasantville.

The Somers family property line was on the north side of Central Church (the Central Methodist Church). The Steelman line was next, going north from the Somers line to Mill Road, which accounts for the three Revolutionary graves in the circle of the street just off Mill Road near the old Steelman homestead.

The Baker line ran from Mill Road to near the present post office. Daniel, son of John Baker, bought this property from George West. John Baker, born on Long Island, married Martha Swain of Nantucket who died and was buried there. He came to Cape May and married Elizabeth Scull, daughter of John Scull, who is buried in the Friends Cemetery in Salem, New Jersey.

Daniel Baker, founder of Bakersville, was a son of this union. He bought his property, built the shipyard, and lived a long and useful life. The Baker homestead, formerly at the corner of Mill and Shore Roads, was a long, straight building of brick and frame, Daniel Baker having built the brick part, and had a marble stone under the eaves with "Daniel and Mary Baker - 1832" on it.

According to Miss Lizzie, when an early community had a store, a mill and a blacksmith shop, the residents considered it very flourishing and the next great event was always a school-house.

The original "great" store was founded by a Yankee peddler, Pardon Ryon, who came down from New England to sell his wares. Perhaps he was like the New England whalers who liked the Cape May climate so much they stayed, because this New Englander, who was one of Miss Edna Ryon's ancestors, started his general store at Mill and Shore Roads in the 1820's, opposite the lot where Collins' store later stood, and was very successful. Goods were brought here by boat from New York and Philadelphia and

overland from Philadelphia, but mostly by boats which were built locally and named by local men. After a short time, Ryon, Price and Adams were all partners in this new venture.

In these early days the store was a hub of activity, standing as it did at the foot of Tilton Road which was an old Indian trail. The inland people used it regularly for barter and trade, at the Bakersville "great" store. One particular item they brought down was herbs, a relic of Indian days, which they traded for staples the boats had brought in from faraway places along the coast.

It is difficult today to imagine Northfield as a bustling seaport, perhaps a smaller replica of Salem, Massachusetts, with its China clipper ships, but bustle it did from about 1830 to 1880, when local shipping and shipbuilding were at its height.

The majority of ships built locally were two-masted schooners and were built to ply coastal waters, although Miss Lizzie said at times her father and uncles touched South American seaports. They may have been similar to the oyster fleet on the Delaware Bay which was very beautiful in full sail on a May day.

The Bakersville shipyard was owned by Daniel Baker and stood on the east side of Shore Road between Mill Road and the post office next to Warren Ryon's home.

A ditch large enough to launch ocean going vessels went from the Shore Road to a stream that enters the bay near Hack-

ney's boatyard, and the ships which Daniel Baker built were all launched in this ditch. One ship was christened "Atlantic County" when the county was new. A lane leading from Shore Road to the ditch is called Baker's Lane (unmarked).

These ships had a capacity of about thirty tons and one of the principal exports was cordwood which the ships loaded in their hold and deck, and took primarily to Manhattan to burn in kilns of brickyards along the Hudson River. Miss Lizzie said it was a sight to see the cordwood piled up and waiting for shipment. It was racked high and deep beside the rail fences from where Surrey Avenue is now to Mill Road, and a similar distance out Mill Road.

Bay products, such as clams, were also shipped by boat to New York and Philadelphia. Other things not indigenous to this section were brought back for the people here to use.

Bread was just as important in olden days as it is today and a local mill was a sign of a permanent town. Men who raised grain enough to sell or just enough for their own use took it to the mill to be ground, and the miller took a "toll" of grain for pay which he could sell. A "toll" was round and about two peck size.

There were five mills in this section: Bargaintown, English Creek, Absecon, Port Republic and where the pumping station is now out Mill Road. This last one was the Price mill and the old



Elizabeth Baker Price
1830-1914



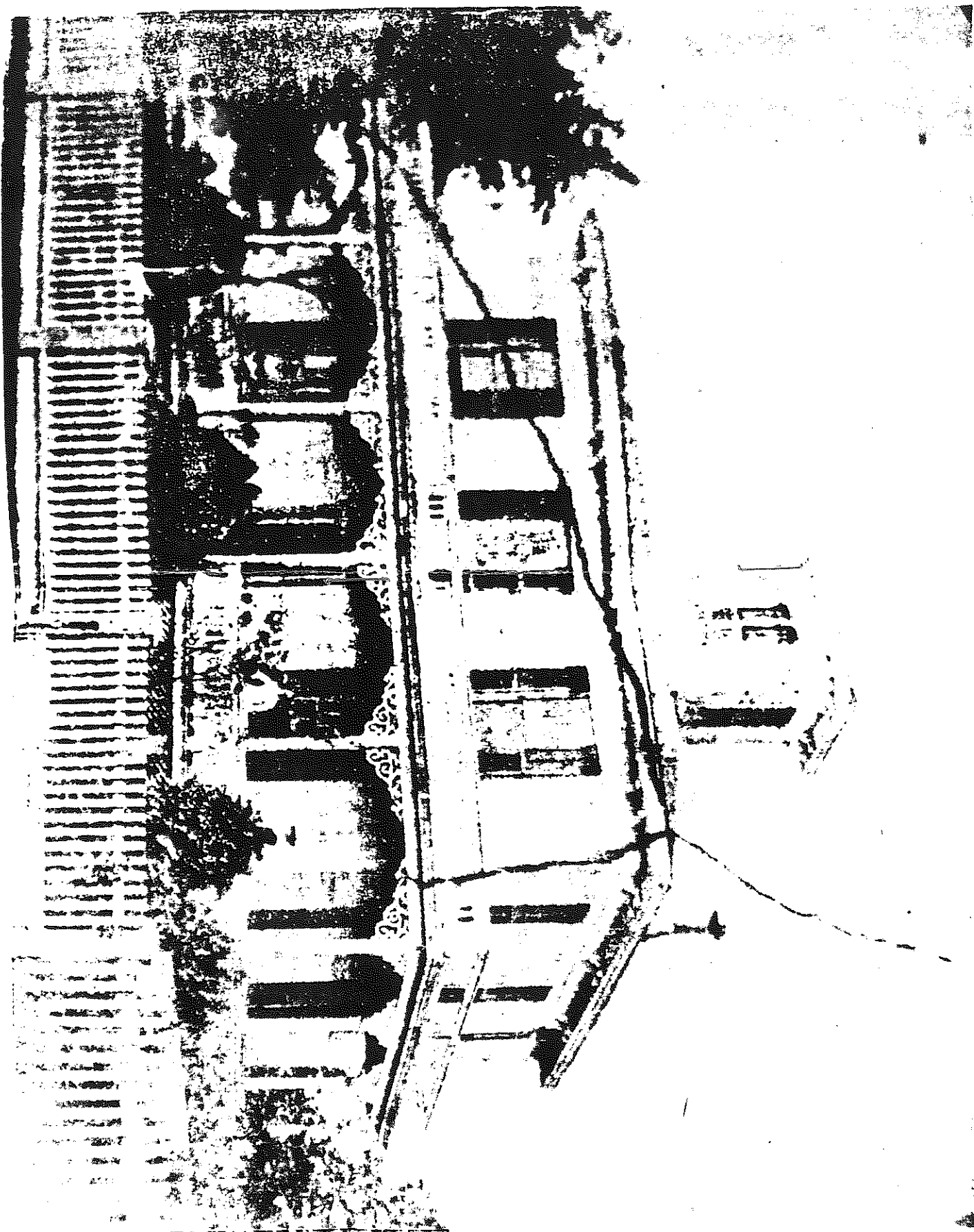
Capt. John Price
1826-1907



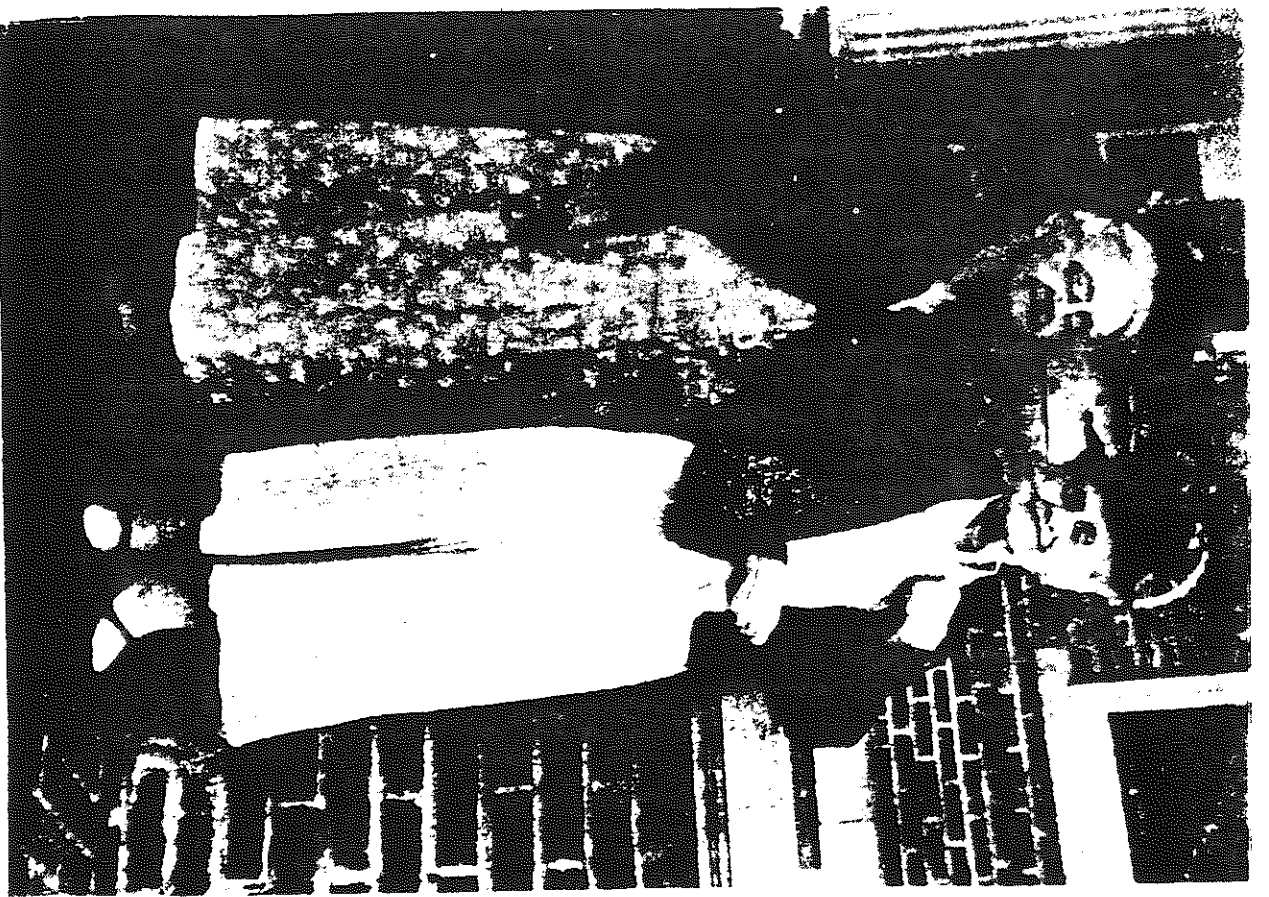
Northeast corner of Mill and Shore Roads circa 1910. Site of Collins' Store, originally established by Edward C. Ryon, whose home was next door. Northfield's first post office was in this store.



Bill Boice's Blacksmith Shop stood where Dr. Martin Friedman's property is now, opposite Edward C. Ryon's home.



Capt. John Price built his home at 2115 Shore Road in 1886.
It is pictured here shortly after its completion.



Miss Lizzie (on right) with Miss Louie at the Masonic Home, Burlington, New Jersey. (picture taken in 1948 or 1949.)

Price homestead was nearby. It was also owned by Risley, Baker, Frambes and Collins.

The first school near here was a Friends School, an adjunct of the Friends Meeting House which stood where the Central Church Cemetery property is now.

Later, in 1817, Bakersville considered itself large enough to have a public school, and leading citizens held a meeting to plan for it. It was decided that the people should contribute by shares, having no return on their investment. The teacher received his money from the number of children who attended school; consequently, there was no school if enough children were not interested to pay the teacher to come. Miss Lizzie had a receipt for education paid to Simon Lake, teacher, for \$1.36 for fuel and tuition, presumably for a three-month period. It was billed to Asbury Price, her grandfather, for her father's schooling.

The first schoolhouse was built of brick and was on the northwest corner of Tilton and Zion Roads. It was built by private subscriptions and the land, about a quarter of an acre, was donated by James Tilton. In this one-room school, children were taught, among other subjects, science and navigation, which seems to be conclusive evidence of the importance of shipping to the town as it was then.

One of the teachers was Emaline D. Huntley of Connecticut

who was advised to come here by Pardon Ryon. She was hired for the salary of \$10.00 a month and board, expecting to board around among the parents of school children.

The present brick school on Mill Road was built in 1914, replacing the frame building which had been built at the same location in 1872, the land having been donated by Capt. John Price.

It was very easy to tell, walking up and down Shore Road, which homes had people in them waiting for a ship to come in. The captains invariably built a "Captain's Watch" on their house tops so they might watch for a sail to come up the bay, and on clear days see the ocean.

The house where the Misses Lizzie and Louie Price lived (2115 Shore Road) was built by their father, John Price, in 1866. A picture of the house in the late 1800's shows a comfortable home with a porch on three sides, a picket fence in front and a nicely landscaped lawn. An interesting picture of this house is an oil painting hanging in the library which was done by G. Francis Meredith, a friend of Miss Lizzie.

Captain Richard Adams built the home just above Miss Lizzie's within a year or two of 1866. A Captain Tilton built the former Burhardt home (1513 Shore Road) about the same time, Miss Lizzie thought. It had a plain front with a two-story front porch of wrought ironwork. The house where Mr. Warren Somers

lived was also a sea captain's home and Miss Lizzie thought it was older than the Captain Tilton home.

The home at 16 West Rosedale Avenue, where Mr. and Mrs. John Hinman lived during the 1940's, was built in 1867 by Elijah Price, brother of John Price. It faced Shore Road about forty feet back from the roadway, setting where West Rosedale Avenue is now. The Tudor Terrace Corporation moved it in order to extend the street in the 1920's. Elijah's garden was on the north side where he raised foodstuff needed for the household. The south side of the house was natural woodland. Miss Lizzie said she thought some of the larger trees between Mr. Hinman's and the Shore Road were some of the original trees. She also said she remembered an occasional trace of the original Shore Road behind her uncle's home, when she was a little girl. It was a narrow roadway of white sand, warmed by the sun, and crowded on either side with masses of wild fern.

It is gone now. The "great" store, the mill, the blacksmith shop, the seaport, the shipyard, the cargoes ... all gone. But we do have the memories ... thanks to Miss Lizzie.

MISS LIZZIE

Miss Lizzie Price was born August 1, 1865, the daughter of John and Elizabeth Baker Price, of Bakersville (now Northfield). She and her sisters, Olive, Susie, who died at the age of 28, Mary Ella and Louie, were quite the belles of their day, riding in their father's carriage with brightly colored parasols. They had one brother, Winfield Scott Price. He and Mary Ella were the only ones who married. John Price, a much respected man in the community, built the home at 2115 Shore Road in 1866. He was a sea captain and later Collector of Customs for the Port of Great Egg Harbor. He was also a charter member of Trinity Lodge No. 79, Free and Accepted Masons of Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Miss Lizzie lived most of her life at the Shore Road family home, was educated in local schools, and was very active in the Central Methodist Church, where she was the Superintendent of the Primary Department for many years. She became a member of the Atlantic County Historical Society which was founded on July 13, 1913, and wrote "Some Articles of General Interest" for their first publication in 1915. These included "Slaves at Bargaintown", "Black Luce", and "Stage Route from Absecon to Philadelphia". A small, fragile woman, she was reputed to have a keen mind and an intense love of books. Of all the sisters, she alone "went into the world" and became employed. She was a

licensed insurance salesperson, and in 1926 was appointed the first librarian for the City of Northfield. She served in this position for over 20 years, when she resigned because of failing health.

Miss Lizzie and her surviving sister, Louie, who was almost twelve years her junior, lived on alone at their home until September 1, 1948, when their long-time friend, Otto Bruyns, who was later to become Northfield's Mayor, escorted them to the Masonic Home in Burlington, New Jersey. There the sisters passed the remainder of their days in serenity and comfort, Miss Lizzie expiring on December 16, 1950 and Miss Louie on June 5, 1961. True to his word, Mr. Bruyns brought them back to their hometown for burial.

She was born into the aristocracy of Northfield, possessed a lively wit and nimble mind, a love for knowledge and a need for achievement. From the horse and buggy era, she lived to see the nuclear age and kept step with it. She performed her duties with diligence and devotion and never failed those who depended upon her. Isn't that what legends are made of?

"Who does not hope and does not work,
does not achieve."

...the editor



Mrs. Sarah Ewing was Historian for the Atlantic County Historical Society during the years 1943 to 1948 when she recorded Miss Lizzie's recollections of early Northfield. She would sit with Miss Lizzie and Miss Louie around the little pot-bellied coal stove in their sitting room which was in the northwest corner in the rear of their home. The large round table in the back of this room was always covered with family records which they used for reference. Mrs. Ewing, a past President of said Society, was first introduced thereto by Miss Lizzie.

EDITOR'S NOTES

The editor acknowledges with deep gratitude all who so graciously offered information, assistance, time, talents, and treasured family photographs, especially the Hon. Otto Bruyns, former Mayor of Northfield; Mrs. Evelyn Ryon Collins, daughter of Warren Ryon; Mrs. John Dilks, grandniece of Miss Lizzie (Mary Ella's granddaughter); Mrs. Sarah Ewing, whose foresight gave us this history; Ron Heibig, Photographer; Mrs. Carol Hickey, Mrs. Edna Adams Learn; Mrs. Carol Patrick, and Miss Paula Todd.

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