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LOCAL HISTORY

Janice Brown's Web site is a window into local history and genealogy.

E. Greenwich's emissary to the past

By Jim Reuter

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

"If we forget the past, we'll go blindly into the future."

So says Janice Brown, East Greenwich Township resident, history buff, genealogist, and Web master of www.jwbrown-home.com/eg/township.htm, a Web site on East Greenwich history.

Brown's site is a mixture of what's old and new (mainly old) in the Gloucester County township, which comprises Mount Royal, Clarksboro and Mickleton. The three localities, linked by Kings Highway, are virtually indistinguishable. Unless you live there, "you don't know where one ... ends and the next begins," Brown said.

Brown and her husband moved from New Hampshire to the Mickleton section of East Greenwich in September 2001. "In New Hampshire, I maintained genealogical Web sites for USGenWeb." The all-volunteer program provides an extensive database for people researching family histories throughout the United States, and Brown's sites concentrated on New Hampshire.

Upon her arrival in Gloucester County, she discovered that such Web sites, along with sites for local history, didn't exist in her new hometown. She set out to change that.

With a background in Internet research and Web site design, along with an insatiable curiosity for all things historical, she began creating the East Greenwich history and genealogy site.

Initially, she didn't have much to go on. She met a neighbor, Mary Cloud Hollingshead, who shared Brown's fascination with history and genealogy and who just happened to own books and documents detailing historical goings-on in the area.

Brown's is not the official East Greenwich site.

"I provide links to other sites, and I make sure I list citations when I provide information," Brown says.

The information available is much more than area residents are probably aware of. Revolutionary War skirmishes, a (pos-



The Little Red Schoolhouse at Harmony and Democrat Roads in Mickleton, shown in a 1937 shot, is East Greenwich Township's best-known historical structure. It was built in 1810.



The Little Red Schoolhouse as it appears today. Restoration of the structure began in 1941. It now serves as a community center.

sibly) haunted graveyard, and a little red schoolhouse are among the historic events and places in the 14.75-square-mile township.

According to Brown, there were two skirmishes along Kings Highway during the Revolution.

"Southern New Jersey was basically farmland, and both armies would send out troops to scour the area for cattle and

crops. It was inevitable that the armies would meet," she said.

They did, twice, both times near the home of Bodo Otto on Kings Highway. More information on the skirmishes; the history of the house (now a private residence); and Otto himself, who served as a surgeon in George Washington's army, is on Brown's Web site.

A site where history might chillingly come alive is the Eg-

lington Cemetery on Kings Highway in Clarksboro. Brown noted that South Jersey Ghost Research investigated the site in May and found significant ghost activity.

According to Brown's Web site, the cemetery is "the oldest [still in continuous operation] cemetery in the United States." Although there is nothing to back up this statement (a plaque at the gate states that the land was set aside as a cemetery in 1776), the graveyard is decidedly old. Headstones date from its founding. People conducting genealogical research will find a trove of information at the cemetery's office, which lists the names, dates of death, and ages of those buried there.

The most public site in East Greenwich is the Little Red Schoolhouse at Harmony and Democrat Roads in Mickleton. Built in 1810, it served initially as a Friends school and then as a public school until 1925. It was vacant until 1941, when township residents began restoration. It has served as a community center since then and has hosted family reunions, wedding receptions and parties. The Little Red Schoolhouse Committee (of which Brown is a member) oversees the facility, holds fairs to fund maintenance, and rents it for events.

Brown's Web site also has links to 27 genealogical- and history-related sites, from the local East Greenwich registrar to the National Center for Health Statistics. There are links to New Jersey marriages from 1684 to 1895, wills before 1900, Revolutionary and Civil War records, USGenWeb, and the Gloucester County Historical Society, among others.

It connects real people and places to history with photos, blueprints of buildings, and stories of early town residents.

"Names and dates are so cold," Brown said. "But if you can understand how people lived, then genealogy and history come alive."

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