



# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the Warren County Historical & Genealogical Society  
 Founded 1931 to preserve the history of Warren County, New Jersey

PO Box 313, 313 Mansfield St. Belvidere, NJ 07823

908-475-4246

warrencountynjhistorical.org

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Brian Duke

heated lime produced in these kilns was slaked with water to make powdered lime for replenishing the soil.

Many of these kilns stand roadside today. On the back of the pamphlet is a map of extant and past kilns dotted in red. These sightings were sourced from the 1874 *County Atlas* by F.W. Beers. There are more kilns not on the Atlas. At least one sits behind the Washington ShopRite on Route 31.



The Muscnetcong River Valley Double Lime Kiln on Rt. 31 may have served several farms.

## News

### Donations Needed

The Warren County Historical Society Museum needs your help for a new air conditioner to preserve our unique collection and provide a comfortable environment for our visitors.

Please send your donations to Warren County Historical Society, Inc. PO Box 313, Belvidere, NJ 07823.

## In Search of Lime Kilns

We have reprinted an old pamphlet of the Society's, *In Search of Lime Kilns in Warren County*, written by Gladys Egger in 1991. Lime burning was a feature of Warren County's agriculture and industry in the 19th century. Warren's first settlers had overfarmed the land, depleting the soil of nutrients. To remedy this, German settlers introduced lime burning. Large stone kilns were built into the side of hills. The

## The Bicentennial

On November 20th, 1824, an act of New Jersey Legislature subdivided the lower half of Sussex to establish Warren County, named in honor of the martyred Founding Father Joseph Warren. That following year, the Freeholders of Warren met in Belvidere and enacted the legislation, hence 2025 being our bicentennial.

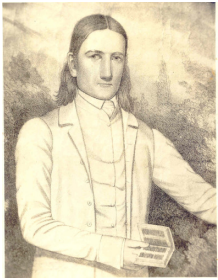
Bicentennial Community Day will take place at Warren County Community College on Saturday, June 28th, 2025. Visit [warrencountynjheritage.com](http://warrencountynjheritage.com) for details.

## The White Pilgrim

by Brian Duke

FROM his boyhood on, the Pilgrim stirred thousands of souls across the Atlantic coast toward faith and conviction. His real name was Joseph Thomas, and he was an itinerant preacher from Ohio with ways that were considered most unusual. Thomas rejected creed and professed a devotion to Scripture only. He dressed in white garb to symbolize his purity and tribulations, and he rode a white horse from town to town, lodging in the homes of strangers. Thomas never seemed to tire from his unrelenting

work. His fanaticism made him a known character in towns all over. Perhaps he is remembered most in Warren County. It is here his travels came to an abrupt end.



Portrait by Wm. Hillyer, 1835.

In 1835 Thomas came to the village of Logg Gaol (Log Jail), today known as Johnsonburg. He delivered a sermon in the stone Episcopal church on Main Street. Hours after, Thomas was struck by smallpox. Care was given to Thomas in the home of Elder J.S. Thompson, but it was of no use. "Now this is the Small Pox," Thomas lamented his worsening condition, "I fear I shall never see my family again." He passed April 9th at the age of 44. His wife and children in faraway Ohio were not permitted to visit him in his final days, nor visit his grave. For fear that his body would contaminate the Christian Church Cemetery, Thomas was buried in the Dark Moon Cemetery. This cemetery, though called that for its proximity to Dark Moon Tavern, was the burial ground of the First Presbyterian Church of Upper Hardwick. It had been long abandoned since the congregation moved to the new Yellow Frame Church in 1786.

In the fall of 1838, Elder John Ellis visited Johnsonburg and stood before the Pilgrim's grave in the Dark Moon Cemetery. Moved to tears by the Pilgrim's story, Ellis penned the poem "White Pilgrim." The poem became famous across the world and was adapted into song and hymn. Bob Dylan performed it as "Lone Pilgrim" on his 1993 *World Gone Wrong* album. "What attracts me to the song," Dylan wrote in the liner notes, "is how the lunacy of trying to fool the self is set aside at some given point. salvation & the needs of mankind are prominent & hegemony takes a breathing spell."

### The White Pilgrim

I came to the spot where the White Pilgrim lay,  
And pensively stood by his tomb,  
When in a low whisper I heard something say,  
How sweetly I sweep here alone.

The tempest may howl, and the loud thunders  
roll,  
And gathering storms may arise,  
Yet calm are my feelings, at rest is my soul,  
The tears are all wiped from my eyes.

The cause of my Saviour compelled me to roam,  
I bade my companion farewell,  
I left my sweet children, who for me now mourn,  
In far distant regions to dwell.

I wandered an exile and stranger below,

To publish salvation abroad,  
The trump of the Gospel endeavored to blow,  
Inviting poor sinners to God.

But when among strangers, and far from my  
home,  
No kindred or relative nigh,  
I met the contagion, and sank in the tomb,  
My spirits ascended on high.

Go! tell my companion and children most dear;  
To weep not for Joseph, tho' gone;  
The same hand that led me thro' scenes dark and  
drear,  
Has kindly conducted me home.

In 1846, ministers of the Christian Church convened in Johnsonburg and raised \$125 to rebury Joseph Thomas in the Johnsonburg Christian Church Cemetery. I visited there in February. In the center of the yard stood a monument surrounded by empty ground that I had sure feeling was the Pilgrim's. The monument is an obelisk of Italian marble.



Now I should mention that the Christian Church that Thomas belonged to was a non-denominational group of "Christ-ians" who, like Thomas, rejected man-made doctrine and believed in Scripture only. Thomas visited Johnsonburg because such a group existed there. They were established in 1826 with the help of Abigail Roberts of the Christian Connection. Their meetings took place in the stone Episcopal church, until construction of the Johnsonburg Christian Church completed in 1848.

We are fortunate to know more about Thomas through his memoir, *The Life, Travels, and Gospel Labors of Elder Joseph Thomas, More Widely Known as the "White Pilgrim;" to Which Are Added His Poems: Religious, Moral, and Satirical*. Thomas wrote this in 1817 at the age of 26, so you won't find any reflections of his on Warren County, or how he might have given Hainesburg and Glen Gardner their earliest name, Sodom.

References: *Tales and Towns of Northern New Jersey* by Henry Charlton Beck (1964), *History of Sussex and Warren Counties* by James P. Snell (1881), *The Life of Eld. Joseph Thomas* (1817), *Autobiography and Poems of Eld. John Ellis* (1895), Johnsonburg's historical markers.