



### **Wheeler Talk, Episode 3, A Pine Barrens Thanksgiving**

***Transcript:***

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Allison

[ALLISON] Welcome to Wheeler Talk: the History of Ocean County. I'm your host, Allison. I'm the local history librarian, and I work out of the Hugh B. Wheeler Room, located on the second floor of the Ocean County Library's headquarters branch in Toms River. Wheeler is a treasure trove of genealogy and local history, resources and home to many cherished one-of-a-kind artifacts. Wheeler is a great place to sit and read or conduct research. To help with your research, Wheeler has rare books, historic pamphlets and magazines, old city directories and phonebooks yearbooks from Ocean County schools, maps, analysis and much, much more. We have regular programming in Wheeler, such as our recurring class for genealogy enthusiasts called Getting Started with Ancestry. Are you a visual learner? Try Wheeler Movie Night. Wheeler Movie Night takes place on the third Thursday of every month, unless otherwise specified. Come and enjoy a rare film from one of our locked cases. Are you an auditory learner? Well, you're in the right place. Each episode of Wheeler Talk will focus on a historic event in Ocean County, as well as highlight some relevant artifacts in Wheeler's own collection.

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Allison

[ALLISON] Now on to today's episode, a Pine Barrens Thanksgiving. The Pine Barrens of New Jersey covers approximately 1.1 million acres spread out over seven counties and 56 municipalities, including our very own Ocean County. Many of us are familiar with the Pine Barrens because we've heard the Jersey Devil lore. But there's more to note about the area than our state's mischievous mascot. According to ProjectLearningTree.org, the earliest residents of the Pine Barrens are believed to have been the Lenape, who arrived approximately 12,000 years ago. The Lenape took advantage of the area's resources through hunting, fishing, gathering and digging for clams in the summer months. According to the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, early settlers named this area the Pine Barrens, because of the sandy acidic soil, which is due to the abundant presence of pine trees which grow there. While pine trees flourish in the barrens, this particular soil type makes it difficult for most other crops to grow. But there are some which do remarkably well. If you're a New Jersey resident, I'm sure you could venture a healthy guess as to which two in particular do especially well. You guessed it - cranberries grow naturally in the Pine Barrens, as well as the state fruit of New Jersey, blueberries. The wild cranberry is a trailing

evergreen vine that is native to the sandy peat bogs of North America, according to Project Learning Tree. It grows naturally in wetlands such as those found in the Pine Barrens. In fact, the village of Chatsworth in the Pine Barrens is touted as the cranberry capital of New Jersey for this very reason.

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Allison

[ALLISON] As for blueberries, our state fruit, they were first cultivated in Whitesbog, a small village in the Pine Barrens. A woman named Elizabeth White, daughter of a cranberry grower, wanted to cultivate the blueberries which grow in nearby bogs. Other farmers had tried to accomplish this themselves and failed so miserably that they believed the cultivation of blueberries to be simply impossible. But Elizabeth persisted, eventually partnering with Dr. Frederick Coville from the United States Department of Agriculture. Together, they conducted years of research which rewarded them with the first successful cultivation of blueberries in 1916. That's right. The world can thank the Pine Barrens' own Elizabeth White and Frederick Colville for the bright blue bushels of blueberries available in food markets today. Over 400,000 people live inside the boundaries of the Pine Barrens, and over 20 million people live within 60 miles. Unfortunately, due to overdevelopment of homes, shopping malls, roads and offices, preservation of the Pine Barrens has become crucial. This is especially significant given the fact that the Pine Barrens accounts for roughly 22% of New Jersey's total land area. There are many preservation efforts going on which you can read about on the New Jersey Conservation Foundation website. Notably, they are currently working to restore over 1000 acres of cranberry bogs and blueberry fields.

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Allison

[ALLISON] Now, Thanksgiving is a time of gratitude, enjoying the company of loved ones and family recipes. Most of us incorporate cranberries into this annual feast. Some even make desserts featuring blueberries. This year, why not bring the Pine Barrens to you by adding some recipes from Pine Barrens cookbooks, which you can find in Wheeler's collection? This first recipe can be found in a book titled Chicken Foot Soup and Other Recipes from the Pine Barrens, edited by Arlene Martin Ridgeway. It's a recipe for basic cranberry sauce, which can be found on page 27. This recipe is fairly simple and only requires three ingredients: one quart cranberries, two cups water, and one and three fourths cup sugar. The recipe is simple and reads: wash and look over berries, boil water, add berries, cover, and cook until outer skin breaks, run it through a sieve, put liquid back on the fire, add sugar and bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer 8 minutes, pack in jars, add small amount of sugar for extra sweetness, yields three pints. This recipe is from Cookie Gil from Waretown.

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Allison

[ALLISON] This next recipe is for candied cranberries, which can be found on page 28 of Chicken Foot Soup and Other Recipes from the Pine Barrens. This recipe also only requires three ingredients: two cups large, perfect cranberries, two cups granulated sugar and two cups water. Step one: sterilize a needle and make a few holes in each cranberry. Step two: boil sugar in water for 4 minutes covered. Step three: cook uncovered to 230 degrees Fahrenheit. Do not stir. Step four: remove from heat, add cranberries and let stand at least 5 minutes. Step five: drain and dry berries on wax paper. Step six: roll berries in

powdered or superfine granulated sugar when almost dry. Yields two cups. This recipe is from Janet Boston Lincoln Park in Waretown.

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Allison

[ALLISON] This final recipe is from the book titled The Best of Blueberries by Marilyn Schmidt and published by Pine Barrens Press. This recipe is for blueberry upside down cake and can be found on page 17. Ingredients for this recipe include one and one half cups blueberries washed and dried, six tablespoons of brown sugar light, packed firm, one cup of flour unbleached, one and one half teaspoons of baking powder, one fourth teaspoon salt, one half pound of butter, one half cup of sugar, one teaspoon vanilla, one large egg, one fourth cup milk. Step one: butter six six-ounce custard cups. Step two: divide berries among these cups. Step three: crumble one tablespoon brown sugar over berries in each cup. Step four: on wax paper, stir together flour, baking powder and salt. Step five: in a medium bowl, cream the butter, sugar and vanilla. Add egg and heat to blend. Step six: stir in flour mixture into additions, alternately with milk mixing only until smooth. Step seven: drop over the berries. Step eight: bake in a 400 degree oven until cake tester inserted in center comes out free of batter - about 20 minutes. Let stand on wire rack for 5 minutes. Loosen edges and turn out onto individual plates. Serve hot topped with whipped cream. If you can't eat gluten, you can substitute flour for any variety of gluten free flour found in your local supermarket.

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Allison

[ALLISON] If you're a vegan, there are some great vegan butters, which you can also find in your local supermarket, as well as oat milk as a substitute for cows' milk. As a substitute for eggs, you can use either banana or applesauce, which not only work well substitutes, but add an additional layer of flavor to your dessert. If you want more recipes from the Pine Barrens, stop by Wheeler and browse our vast local cookbook collection.

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Allison

[ALLISON] Thank you for listening to Wheeler Talk: the History of Ocean County. See you next time for another blast from the past.