

## ABOUT THE NICHOLSONS

The first John J. came from the town of Athy\* in the County of Kildare, Ireland in the first half of the 19th Century. Athy's industry was largely brick making. They came on a sailing ship and landed at Perth Amboy, N.J., a town with similar brick making opportunities. After a while he moved up to New York State where he invested in a brick yard. I do not know his wife's name although it's probably up on the Nicholson stone in St. Peter's Cemetery in Haverstraw. At any rate there were 2 children of this marriage: Annie, who married a man named Farrell and moved West and was never heard of again and the second John J. who was your great grandfather. He and his father circulated between Beacon and Haverstraw, running the brickyard and attending to the grocery store. All the employees had to buy groceries from him as there were no other stores around. This turned out to be a financially valuable move. One year he discovered and bought a very valuable bank of blue clay and none of his competitors had any. It was at this time he managed to sock away a large part of his fortune.

As he grew older his two sons, Johnnie and Willie ran the brickyard. Your great grandfather ran his second grocery store in Haverstraw. I have heard my father speak of the ease with which he could heft a 200 lb. barrel of sugar to his shoulder; and how once a year he would hitch up the horse and make a trip to New York City to have his bank books brought up to date. He died of Bright's Disease in 1916. But he did not die before my father's wire arrived announcing his graduation from the University of Maryland's Medical School. They said he sat out in front of the store all day showing the telegram to everyone. He was not a drinking man but when he caught a cold, maybe once a year, my grandmother would make him drink hot lemonade with some whiskey in it and then he would sing all the old Irish songs all night long. When he died he had managed to accumulate a nest egg of \$100,000 -- an unbelievable sum in those days. Everyone in Haverstraw knew him as "Honest John".

\*Athy is pronounced " a tie"

My grandmother and your great grandmother, Martha Green Nicholson, was a pretty woman with grey dark-lashed eyes. There were other children of this marriage than I have recorded but they died so close to birth that I deleted them. She had quite a temper, I have been told, and was given to fits of sulks when things did not go her way. She was wild about her one daughter, Martha (Mattie) and it almost killed her when she lost her to rheumatic heart disease. I have also heard that she lost 5 children in one week to diphtheria. All of which could answer for her lack of emotional equilibrium.

My father and your grandfather, Francis Peter Nicholson (Frank) was a hard working simple honest man-- much the same as the environs he came from. His family was the most important thing in his life and he did everything he could to see that they received a good education. He would have been so happy to have seen all of you and to know how you have turned out. In those days (1912) when my father went to school a college degree was not a medical school pre-requisite. So he went right from Haverstraw High School into the rigorous study requirements of a medical school. I have often wondered how he did it without all the college years of preparation. When he graduated he went right to South Baltimore Hospital and specialized in Ophthalmology. He opened up practice in Jersey City and did very well financially. He provided a most comfortable living with 2, 3 and sometimes 4 in help. My mother had ample funds to buy beautiful things, which she did, industriously. Usually she bought in threes-- one eventually for each child. Of course the two robberies she had put the quietus on that ambition. My father practiced in Jersey City nearly 50 years and was much beloved by his patients. I heard him say once that these 50 year medals were no great gift because of the attendant physical drawbacks of that advanced age.