

The Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER



Volume 34, Issue One

March, 2009

Spring Potluck & Appraisal Night Friday, March 20

The Historical Society cordially invites all members and their guests to the spring potluck supper on Friday, March 20, 2009 at 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall of the First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury. Members are asked to provide their own place settings and a favorite dish, serving 8 to 10, to share.

The evening's speaker will be Tom Petrino. He is the owner Time Traveler Antiques and an appraiser for the NJ State Treasury. Attendees are welcome to bring an object to be discussed "Antiques Roadshow" style in front of the group. Items will be placed on a table at the beginning of the talk, and Mr. Petrino will go through them and give a verbal appraisal.

So, brush off that odd item you've always wanted to know more about and comb through your recipe file for your specialty and join us for a fun, informative evening!

Michelle Newman-Dickey & Mia Lindberg,
Vice Presidents & Program Chairmen



Special Sales Table at March 20 meeting!
Look for special sales of old
back issues of Cranbury Press, books &
other interesting items
including tee-shirts for only \$5!

The Society has a number of pieces of cutlery and serving utensils left behind from previous potlucks. Please see Norma Swale at the Supper on March 20 if you're missing a piece.



President's Message

Welcome to a new year in the life of the Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society. We are fortunate to have a loyal membership, a dedicated executive board, a beautiful museum with interesting exhibits, and a valuable history center.

Our Society offers many opportunities for participation throughout the year. If you are interested in becoming involved, please attend our potluck supper meetings in March and November and invite others to come with you. I hope you will plan to help with the 2009 House Tour that will be held in October. You might consider working at our table at the Drug Free Fair on May 16, helping with our Memorial Day Parade float, or working at our table on Cranbury Day. Please plan to bring your family and friends to the Lantern Ghost Tour on June 6 and to the Christmas Tea at the museum. Consider becoming a docent, or a museum inspector, or joining one of the standing committees listed in this newsletter. Most importantly, please speak to your friends and neighbors about membership in CHPS.

To learn more about opportunities for participation or to share any ideas or suggestions you may have, please contact any member of the Executive Board. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will continue to support CHPS.

Audrey Smith, President

HELP NEEDED

The Society is in need of a publicity chairperson who would be responsible for publicizing exhibits, meetings, programs, special activities, and events. The publicity chairperson is a member of the Executive Board. If you are interested in the position, please contact Audrey Smith at 609-655-5361.

Don Jo Swanagan to be honored

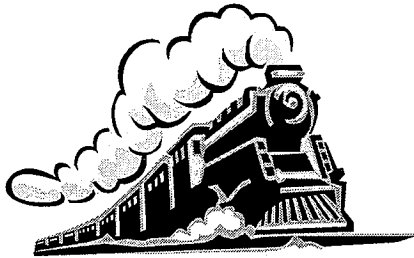
Don Jo Swanagan retired as Museum Curator at the end of 2008. Through the years, Don has devoted his talents, along with countless hours, to CHPS as curator and in many other technical capacities. We appreciate his efforts in helping to make our museum a beautiful and educational place to visit. Don will be honored at a reception at the museum on **Saturday, April 4, 2-4 PM**. You are invited to attend and join in offering your good wishes to him.

THANK YOU BONNIE THOMPSON

For many years, Bonnie Thompson has scheduled and the team of museum inspectors who take turns visiting the museum six days a week to make sure that everything is in order and operating correctly. Bonnie is retiring from her position, and we thank her for her years of service in helping to keep our museum running smoothly. Current museum inspectors are Bonnie and Mahlon Thompson, Kay & John Gartner, Bill Keller, Mark Madden, Gladys & John Frisch, Beverly & Craig Gilbert, Jane Huff & Lil Conley, and Audrey & George Smith. If you would like to join the team of museum inspectors, please contact the new coordinator, George Smith, at hhsc@comcast.net.

Spring Museum Yard & Garden Projects

Watch the Museum yard this spring for a special sign placed by the Camden & Amboy R.R. ties and stones. The new sign, a gift from Sara Hoffman's daughter Mrs. George (Margaret) Dubell, tells the story of the beginning of railroads in New Jersey. Also watch the Museum grounds for the work of Eagle Scout candidate George Stewart who will be edging all the garden beds with brick and working on the driveway stone.



"John Quincy Adams and Cornelius Vanderbilt in Railroad Accident!"

From the Newark Daily Advertiser, Sat. Nov. 9, 1833:

"An accident occurred yesterday on the Camden and Amboy Rail Road, about four miles from Hightstown and fourteen from Amboy (Cranbury). The cause of the casualty was caused by the breaking of the axle of the first regular car, containing 24 passengers, which caused the car to upset by which Mr. J.C. Stediman, of Raleigh, N.C. was instantly killed, and several others considerably injured...Capt. Vanderbilt..was slightly injured. The Hon. John Quincy Adams was among the passengers, but did not receive any injury and proceeded on his route..."

"Dirt Under Your Nails"

Normadelle Swale

The gardens at the museum are having a snooze. Well, not the herb garden, where the rosemarys are alert — tall, green and fragrant to the touch.

The dusty millers along the driveway look gray, tired and crumpled but this is their second winter and they recovered and bloomed last spring. So if you plant them as a summer plant leave them in the ground for a similar treat.

The boxwoods are thriving and add structure to the back landscape!

Call me if you would like to help in the garden, or if you are able to contribute some plants or equipment, 655-3028.

Visitors Treated to Beautifully Decorated Museum

Normadelle Swale

Volunteers gave generously of their time and talent and the visitors to the museum this holiday season expressed their delight at the sights!

Special thanks are given to Lynn Lakner who did the children's room and the master bedroom as only she can dream up; Melanie Johnson for her *very* Victorian living room, and Patti Long and Diane Stasi for their exuberant dining room décor. Barbara Wahlers got the kitchen all ready for the feasts to be cooked, surrounded by her decorations.

Lisa Beach and the long-standing committee of ladies string popcorn and cranberries and draped the lovely tree donated by Bill Bunting from his farm on Bunker Hill.

For my part, I did the outside of the museum and the driveway and back hall picture window. Can't wait for next Christmas to see what we all come up with!

COLONEL JOSEPH MCCHESNEY, FORGOTTEN HERO

BY JERRY PEVAHOUSE

Standing in Westminster Cemetery Cranbury is a tall monument inscribed "Col Joseph M McChesney, 1st N C Vol's Born Sept 25, 1838 Died Aug 14, 1865". When I first saw the stone being a Southerner I was immediately fascinated he had been Colonel of the 1st North Carolina Volunteers, a Southern regiment during the Civil War. It was years before I would learn the story of Colonel McChesney's life.

I eventually learned he had been born in Cranbury in 1838 but his family moved to Brooklyn when he was a young boy. He grew to adulthood in Brooklyn then began work with the Jewelry company of Pratt and Bros. At the beginning of the Civil War Joseph was attending the church of noted abolitionist Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe writer of the "Uncle Tom's Cabin". Reverend Beecher was one of the most popular and outspoken ministers in the New York area, who preached a very unorthodox version of Christianity. Sunday morning following his famous Cooper Union Hall address Abraham Lincoln attended Beecher's church.

When Congress declared war against the rebelling Southern States in April of 1861 young men at the church including Joseph organized a company of the 13th Regiment Brooklyn Volunteers. The famous 13th Brooklyn Regiment remains today as the longest standing regiment still in US service. They were quickly organized and transported South to help with the defense of Washington. They were so hastily organized some men were without uniforms or arms when they arrived in Washington.

Following 3 months enlistment in the 13th Brooklyn Joseph returned to Brooklyn. But he was not content to be inactive while the country was at war. During March of 1861 he returned to Cranbury to enlist as 1st Lieutenant Company M, 9th New Jersey Volunteers. The company was formed of mostly local men Joseph had known during his childhood in Cranbury. Many of his relatives lived in Cranbury. He had strong attachments to the community.

The 9th Regiment was sent to the Carolinas as part of the Peninsula Campaign. Joseph was handsome, smart, brave and ambitious. Because of his courage and exceptional leadership skills he was promoted Captain of company A. A daring leader he was wounded in the leg during the battle at New Bern, North Carolina March 14, 1862. May 1, 1862 the following article was printed in

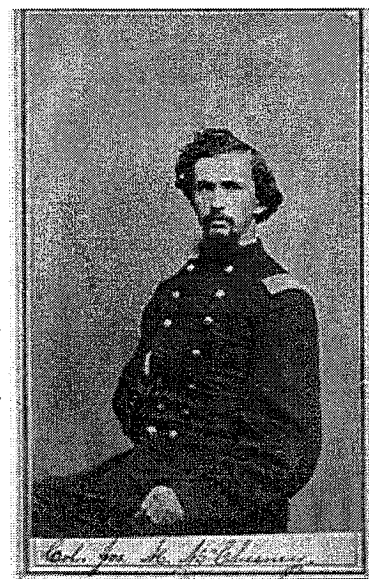
the Hightstown Gazette:

"We had the pleasure of a visit on Tuesday from Capt McChesney of Co M, 9th Reg't N.J.V. Now at Newport Barracks North Carolina. His numerous friends will be glad to learn that he has quiet recovered from the wound caused by the passage of a ball though his leg at the battle of Newbern. Although requiring the aid of a cane he expects to return to take command of his company the last of the week. His company is at present in charge of Lieutenant Aspleget of whom the captain speaks in the highest terms."

The commander of the 9th NJ Volunteers praised Captain McChesney's company saying they could easily out perform any company in the regiment. He served as military commander of Washington, North Carolina then was promoted Colonel of the 1st Regiment North Carolina Union Volunteers, Feb. 20, '63. The North Carolina Union Volunteers had been organized the year earlier of Southern men who chose to fight for the Union cause.

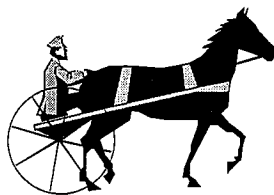
Late in the war Col. McChesney received a wound to his right knee during a skirmish at Washington, NC. After Lee's surrender he resigned his commission May 13, 1865 planning to remain in North Carolina after the war to start a business. However, he died unexpectedly August 14, 1865 at the Union Military hospital Beaufort, North Carolina from complications of his leg wound. During his short life he had seen his country dissolve into chaos, experienced some of the darkest hours of American history, risen to prominence and finally witnessed the rebirth of a nation. Colonel McChesney was 26 years old when he died.

Had he lived no doubt his future would have been one of success and prominence. His body was returned to Cranbury and buried beside his ancestors in Westminster Cemetery. Only a stone remains by which we may remember him. As was said of Lincoln "He is with the ages now."



The Hambletonian: Its Trotters, their Connections and the Racing Event 1926-2009

On Exhibit at the Cranbury Museum



In 1852, a three-year-old trotter ran a mile in 2:48.5 minutes, the world's record for the time. This trotter was named Hambletonian after the English community of Hambleton. Purchased for \$125 dollars, William Rysdyk recognized the power and speed of Hambletonian. Rather than race Hambletonian, Rysdyk used him to sire over 1300 foals. One hundred and fifty of his sons sired standard performers and flooded the country with Hambletonians. The champion fathered a whole new breed of horses, the standardbred.

Businessman Harry Reno wanted to promote the sport of harness racing in the early 1920's. He created the concept of The Hambletonian Stake- a trotting race for standardbred horses. There was no question about the name of the event. The prestigious race would be named after Hambletonian, the great father of the modern standardbred.

The first Hambletonian Stake occurred in Syracuse, New York at the state fair on August 30, 1926. After a pair of straight heat victories, Guy Mc Kinney won the stake and its owner was \$45,815.52 richer. The Hambletonian was raced in Lexington, Kentucky in 1927 and 1929 due to rainout years in Syracuse.

Held in Goshen, New York in 1930 The Hambletonian remained there until 1956 when the race was moved to Du Quoin, Illinois. Annual visitors to the DuQuoin State Fair included such celebrities as Sammy Davis Jr., Milton Berle, Ernie Ford, Pat Boone, Rosemary Clooney, George Burns, Johnny Carson, Diana Ross and Nat "King" Cole.

Finally in 1981, The Hambletonian arrived at the new race track at the Meadowlands in New Jersey. Governor Thomas Kean enthusiastically welcomed the prestigious event to his state. Known as "the Super Bowl of Trotting" The Hambletonian continues to thrive in New Jersey.

Since its inception in 1924, The Hambletonian Society, a non- profit organization, has nurtured and promoted The Hambletonian Stake. It continues today, preparing for the 2009 event scheduled in August. Currently, the office of The Hamiltonian Society is located in Cranbury. This organization has generously loaned most of the items used in this exhibit.

Additional items have been loaned by the Fair Winds Farm, a breeding farm located in Cream Ridge, New Jersey. Mark Mullen, a Cranbury resident, along with his father, Ed are owners of Fair Winds Farm. Selected as 2008 Breeder of the Year by the NJ Equine Advisory Board, Fair Winds Farm has been breeding Standardbreds for over 40 years. Fair Winds Farm was part owner of the 1987 Hambletonian winner, Mack Lobell. This champion's trophy and other items are displayed in the exhibit room.

The Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society wishes to thank the following organizations and people for their time, support and loan of the many items on exhibit: **The Hambletonian Society's** Tom Charters, CEO, and Mary Lou Dondarski, Manager; and **Fair Winds Farm's** Mark Mullen.

*Lisa Beach, Jerry Pevahouse & Karen Kelley
Curators*

While at the museum, be sure to watch, Road to Glory, a video that tells the story of the Hambltetonian.

History on the Web

Do you know that you can sign up for late-breaking Society news delivered directly to your email in-box? Just visit the CHPS website at <http://cranburyhistory.org/> and click on the "Register for Updates" link on the left of your screen. Enter your email address and select the list(s) you want to sign up for. After you register you will receive a confirmation email that you must reply to in order to complete the subscription process. Just follow the instructions in the email. It's a good idea to add webmaster@cranburyhistory.org to your address book so that the emails don't end up in your junk mail box.

Membership Update Fran Rak

The Society extends a warm welcome and thanks to James and Debbie Taylor of Shadow Oaks, new members since Fall 2008. In addition, we wish to acknowledge the area businesses to continue to support the Society. Thank you to the following for their generosity: Allen & Stults Company; Blue Rooster Bakery & Café; Chip Trucking; Cranbury Comfort Systems; Cranbury Pizza; David Wells Antiques; Herr's Plumbing and Heating Service; Meyer & Meyer Painting & Papering; and Montessori Preschool Academy Cranbury.

In Memoriam

The Society notes with sadness the passing of the following members since our last newsletter.

Alfred Meiss (Charter Member)
Robert Shimer

2009 Membership Form

Mail checks to: **Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society**, P.O. Box 77, Cranbury, NJ 08512

Membership Status (check one): New Renewal

Membership Category (check one): Individual, \$15.00 Family, \$25.00 Sponsor, \$35.00
 Patron, \$50.00 or more Corporate, \$150.00 or more

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Matching gifts are a significant source of support for the Society. If you work (or have retired from) one of the hundreds of companies that generously match employee donations, please don't let this opportunity pass you by. Just ask your Personnel Office for a Matching Gift form, fill it in and send it to us. We'll do the rest. Together we can continue to preserve our unique heritage.

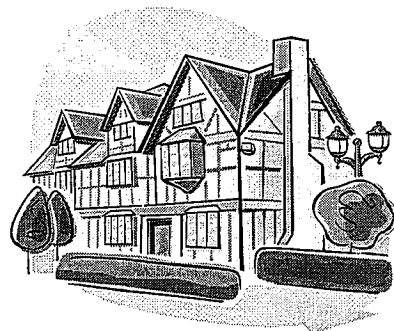
Please consider one or more of the following volunteer opportunities: Museum docent: _____ Social functions: _____

House tour: _____ Educational programs: _____ Fundraising: _____ Publicity: _____

Other: _____

HOUSE TOUR DATE SET

The CHPS 2009 House Tour will take place on Saturday, October 17. The next meeting of the House Tour Committee will be on Tuesday, March 24 at 7:30 PM at the Museum. You are invited to attend. For information about how you can help, please contact Bobbie Marlowe at 655-3493 or Audrey Smith at 655-5361.



Docent News *Arlene Duran, Chairperson*



Welcome to our three newest docents, Don Davidson, Pat Scott and Fran Rak. Also, a big thank you to all the docents who work at the museum month after month.

If anyone is interested in becoming a docent please call Arlene Duran at 609-860-0164 or email at atduran@comcast.net. We are always in need of more docents.

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Cranbury Museum

4 Park Place East
Open Sundays 1 to 4 and by appt.
Ph: 609/655-2611

Cranbury History Center

6 South Main Street
Open Tuesdays 10:30 to 1:30 & by appt.
Ph: 609/860-1889
Email: historycenter@comcast.net
Web: www.cranburyhistory.org
Webmaster: webmaster@cranburyhistory.org