

The Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 31, ISSUE THREE

OCTOBER, 2006

FALL POT LUCK MEMBERSHIP MEETING FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3 6:30 P.M.

Historic Society members, their guests and community members are cordially invited to attend our Fall Potluck Supper, general meeting and entertaining presentation by Mark Else of the Meadows Foundation to be held on Friday, November 3, in the Parish Hall, 1st Presbyterian Church of Cranbury.

Please bring a salad, main dish or dessert to serve eight to ten, along with your own dinner plate and silverware. Beverages will be provided. The supper starts at 6:30 p.m., so please arrive accordingly. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. with a presentation by Mr. Else beginning at 8:00.

Come and share in an evening of great food and fellowship. After a brief membership meeting with the election of officers for 2007 we will have an informative look at the work of fellow preservation organization, The Meadows Foundation of Franklin Township. Mark Else has held leadership positions at the Foundation since the 1970s. Since 1998 he has focused on the restoration of one of the Foundation's properties, the Wyckoff-Garretson house. We look forward to hearing about the successes of both the Foundation and Mr. Else in preserving historic sites of Dutch and American heritage in Somerset County.

Norma Swale,

Vice President & Program Chairman



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CARL HELSTROM

Many thanks to all the volunteers who turned out to help at the Cranbury Museum and at our tables on Main Street for Cranbury Day. We sold lots of plants and memorabilia and signed up some new members. Kudos to the Cranbury Business & Professional Association for another successful event. What a wonderful way to celebrate and appreciate our town.

Congratulations are also due to the Township and the Cranbury Lions Club for moving closer to a workable ordinance and use and occupancy agreement for the prospective Cranbury Neck Road Barn Park. A few contributions have already been received in the special account we established for the restoration effort. As the project progresses, we hope to provide financial and volunteer support and, ultimately, add another historic asset to Cranbury.

At the beginning of the year, a Restoration Committee was established to be sure the historic contents of the Cranbury Museum are being preserved appropriately. The Committee hired a preservation expert to analyze the History Center and Museum and compiled a range of general and specific recommendations, some of which the Executive Board has already authorized. For more information about the findings and recommendations of the Museum Restoration Committee, please see the related story on page three.

Please read Norma Swale's story on this page to get all the details on the next Potluck Supper and Membership Meeting. Hopefully our special guest speaker will give us some ideas and inspiration for the Barn Preservation Project.

The Society's Traditional Christmas Tea is scheduled

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HOLIDAY SHOPPING MADE EASY ~ HISTORY CENTER HOURS EXTENDED



The Society has added a number of lovely gift items to its shop, all ready for holiday gift-giving. In addition to the sturdy, practical and attractive tote (\$25) shown here, there are now available sets of elegant glassware and a matching carafe, sold separately. The glasses hold approximately 8 oz. and the carafe holds approximately 18 oz. All feature the Tercentennial logo. The glasses are sold in a set of 4 for \$20 and the carafe is priced at just \$10 each.

Other gift items are offered at the History Center, including the 100% cotton Cranbury afghan (in cranberry, of course!) for \$50. Salt-glazed crocks in limited quantities, prints and notecards also are on sale.

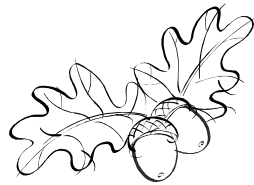
Visit the History Center at 6 South Main Street on the following Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. to get all your shopping done: November 18 and December 2, 9 & 16.

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for Sunday, December 3. Details are on page 3.

Finally, I invite you to visit our new website at www.cranburyhistory.org. We hope the site will become a valuable communication and information tool for members, researchers, residents, and visitors. It's a work in progress, managed by volunteers, so all constructive comments are appreciated.

Fall Walking Tour of the Village a Great Success



Over seventeen adults and children joined the CHPS Membership Committee-sponsored walking tours of Cranbury's historic district on October 7. Tour takers included both longtime and newer residents of Cranbury. On the walks, tour leaders, Ginny Swanagan and Peggy Brennan, spoke about Cranbury's beginnings and development over the years, the types of businesses which flourished at different times in Cranbury, and architectural styles in the historic district. Guides also described the loss of specific historic structures through tear downs prior to the creation of the historic district in 1980. Enthusiastic tour takers asked questions as the tours progressed.

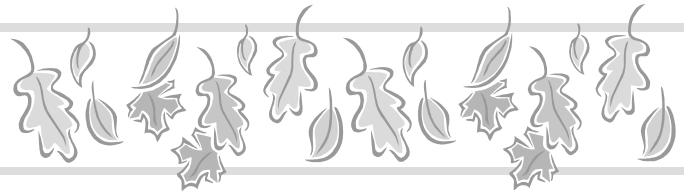
Watch for information on additional walking tours of Cranbury to be given in the spring.

TAKING A SPECIAL TOUR OF THE MUSEUM

Six mornings a week men and women can be found touring the Cranbury Museum, although not to take in the latest special exhibition. Their tour includes the furnace room, the pipes, the roof. These men and women take care to note the condition of the facility and to report anything that might be amiss.

Our special thanks go out to Bonnie Thompson and her devoted crew, who check for leaks and turn up the heat on those cold winter mornings. They call the Museum curators or on occasion the plumber and as a result have avoided a crisis or two over the years.

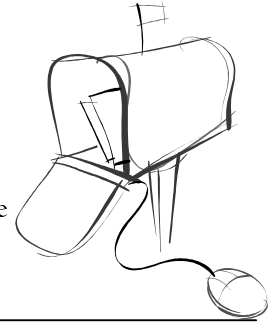
These individuals, all of whom have been making their rounds for five or more years are: **Joacum Christiansen, John & Gladys Frisch, Craig & Beverly Gilbert, Rusty Hankin, Bill Keller, Mark Madden, and Mahlon & Bonnie Thompson.** Thank you to these behind-the-scenes heroes!



Hundreds of mums — more than 650 — plus cornstalks, hardy pansies and flowering kale and cabbage are beautifying Cranbury this fall, thanks to the plant sale chaitmen Karen Fiorentini and Norma Swale. The ladies, in turn, would like to thank everyone who supported the sale, as well as those who unloaded those hundreds of plants from the nursery trucks and delivered the orders to homes around town.

Web updates delivered to your inbox are just a click away...

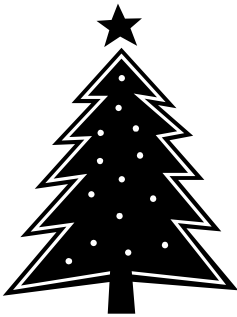
Remember, you can get late-breaking CHPS news delivered directory to your email Inbox. Just go to <http://www.cranburyhistory.org> and click on "Register for Updates" in the left column. Then enter your email address and select the type of information you want to receive. You can receive general CHPS news as well as alerts when the website is updated. After you register, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions on how to complete the activation of your subscription. Just follow the directions, and you're all set.



Rob Diamond, Webmaster

Decking the Halls in Time for the Christmas Tea & Open House

Each year the Society spends a morning decorating the Museum for Christmas. The Museum, which is housed in a c.1834 home and displays artifacts related to the time period, will be adorned with decorative items that evoke the holiday spirit of the Victorian era.



The annual tree decorating will take place on Thursday, November 30 at 10:00 a.m. All members and their friends are welcome to come string popcorn and cranberries, to adorn the tree. A light luncheon will follow.

The Christmas Tea and Open House will be held on Sunday, December 3, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Plan to stop in, sample the Society's renowned spiced tea and homemade cookies, and perhaps join in a carol at the pump organ. This cherished event is sure to put you in the mood for a happy holiday season!

Restoration Committee Established

In November 2005 the Executive Board and Trustees of the Society directed the formation of a Restoration Committee to evaluate the assets of the Cranbury Museum, and as needed, restore certain items with the proceeds from the 2005 House Tour. Since that time, the Restoration Committee contracted a conservator, Thomas Heller, from Heller Conservation Services, who evaluated the condition of the Museum's collections, art work and furnishings, including the atmospheric conditions of the Museum.

For the most part, our assets are in good order. We have however, selected a number of items for restoration - 3 parlor chairs will be reupholstered and stabilized and the sofa leg will be reconditioned from an earlier repair. Also, we will have the parlor rug rebound. We hope in the near future to invite a textile conservator to assess items such as our doll collection and costumes. We are pleased that our collections reflect the care given them over the years and hope that the measures we implement today will preserve them for future visitors and generations.

Lisa Beach, Chairman

Membership News

On Cranbury Day, Sept 9th, the CHPS table was busy all day with people stopping by for information about the Society, to purchase items on sale, and to order mums and other plants. Ten new members, or member families, joined the Society on Cranbury Day. As part of a Cranbury Day promotion, first-time memberships were entered in a drawing for a special gift. Alison Meiss, the winner, received a set of beverage glasses etched with the Cranbury seal. Alison, who grew up in Cranbury, now lives and works in Washington, DC. Congratulations, Alison!

The Membership Committee would like to thank those local businesses that support the Society as paid members. The Society appreciates the support and encourages our members to patronize these establishments. Our business members are: **Allen & Stults Company; Chip Trucking Inc.; Cranbury Pizza; David Wells Antiques; and Montessori Preschool Academy Cranbury.**

Welcome also to the following new individual or family members: **Larry Burd, Cranbury Lions Club, Jennifer Cooke, Raymond & Michelle Dickey, Karen Janes, Alfred Meiss, Alison Meiss, Lynda Patterson, Edward Rhodes & Kadri Kallikorm-Rhodes, and Harvard & Joyce Sklar.**

Bev Luck & Kirstie Venanzi, Co-Chairmen

The Civil War and Local Politics

By Jerry Pevahouse

This is the last in a series that shares Jerry's research on Cranbury during the Civil War. Excerpts are taken from Hightstown Gazette of 1861 and 1862.

In some ways the initial shock of the dissolution of the Union and sudden declaration of war in April 1861 was much like the reaction we all saw after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Flags could be seen everywhere, public buildings, businesses, homes. Communities erected "Union Poles" to show their patriotism.

May 3, 1861: "A Union Pole with the national ensign was raised on Saturday last on the premises of Isaac Pullen Esq. Our people are a unit in their devotion to the glorious old banner and it is difficult to lose sight of the stars and stripes at any point of a journey through our section."

But the community was not unified. There were intense differences of opinion about the war that set neighbor against neighbor. "Union men" advocated no compromise with the rebel states. "Peace men" advocated political compromise and negotiation to bring the war to a quick end without military confrontation.

Sept 5, 1861: "The peace men of Monmouth County attempted to hold a compromise meeting at Middleton on Thursday, at which Thomas Dunn English and others were to speak. The Union men however of that good old county determined that no such secession sentiments should be uttered in their midst and so assembled in strong force and organized a meeting of their own. The secessionist then attempted to draw off their force to another locality but the plan did not appear to work well. Mr English appeared on the ground in a carriage was roughly treated and was about being dragged from his carriage when the US Marshal in New Jersey Benajah Deacon made his appearance and took Mr English under his protection, conducting him to the hotel whither he was followed by an excited crowd who manifested their desire to get hold of that noted secessionist. Everything was forgotten. The Union boys broke into one room after another and not until Mr English secreted himself away in the place unfit for a living being was he safe from his pursuers many of who expressed their determination to remain about the place until they succeeded in finding him."

"Capt Low Fisher of New Brunswick knocked down a man in that place last week from Monmouth County for uttering treasonable sentiments. The secessionist was severely injured."

Sept 19, 1861: "One night last week as we are informed some cowardly wretch raised a black flag on the handsome

liberty pole at Dutch Neck. The fellow knew he was doing a mean and cowardly deed by seeking to cover it by the darkness of night."

By the end of 1861 young men in most communities had organized militia units. Cranbury had McClellan's Zoaves and the Butler Guard. Support for these amateur military enterprises was not shared by everyone as noted in the Hightstown paper.

December 26, 1861: "The revival of the old system of militia training after so many years rest meets in any quarter with but chilling response from the people. Everywhere it appears to be looked upon as an unmitigated nuisance and an exhibition of petty tyranny on the part of a few individuals who have chanced to gain a questionable position. Every one feels that if these gentlemen desire an honorable military reputation they should go where their country offers an open field and fair opportunity. The glitter of epaulets and polished sword no longer dazzle the eyes of even the veriest country bumpkin except they be worn by one who reflects the honor upon them. "

August 7, 1862: "A Mass meeting will be held in the village of Cranberry, on Tuesday afternoon, August 12 at 3 o'clock which will be addressed by Rev Dr Crosby of New Brunswick, Rev J Addison Henry of Philadelphia, and Rev J G Symmes, Rev Thos D Hoover, and Rev B F Woolston of Cranberry. An opportunity will be given those wishing to enlist in the service of their country to join in the company which is being raised in that place by Capt Symmes H Stults of the 14th Regiment."

Reverend Woolston of the Cranbury Methodist Church was a strong "Union man" but his efforts were not always appreciated by all his parishioners.

"On Sunday Night week, as we are informed the Rev Mr Woolston, pastor of the ME Church of Cranberry, preached a sermon which proved objectionable to some of his audience from being a Union sermon. No demonstration was made at the time of the service, but the delicate sensibilities of Jeff's sympathizers could not brook this open insult to their feelings and consequently a plot instigated by the demon of darkness was arranged by which on Friday night the Rev Gentleman was hung in effigy before his own door. The work was done stealthily showing that the sympathizers were either afraid or ashamed of their own work."

A week later this response to the article about the hanging in effigy of Reverend Woolston was printed in the Hightstown paper. *Mssrs. Editors: You have noticed in your paper the hanging of a Union man in effigy in this place a few nights ago. And such a notice of course is calculated to discredit our quiet village. But we desire it to be*

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distinctly understood that this was the work of some mischievous boys, or of some sneaking cowards, working at midnight, and not daring to attempt their harmless trick in the light of day. No decent man in this community can be found who does not abhor such dastardly conduct.

But to show the real sentiment of this community will you please give place to a notice of two Union meetings lately held in this place. One was under the auspices of the Township Committee, and was convened in the Drill-room on Thursday evening 7th inst. Although the notice was short the room was crowded.

You may rest assured that this whole community is becoming more and more unanimous in the feeling that terrible war is the only road to permanent peace, and in the determination to do or suffer anything in order to secure a right termination of this contest. And this feeling and determination has been shown in the large number sent forth to the war and in the still large number who are now rushing to arms from our midst. From all classes and all opinions they are coming with alacrity.

Reverend Joseph Gaston Symmes of the Cranbury Ist

Presbyterian Church was the most ardent supporter of the Union cause in Cranbury. He spoke passionately at almost all the Union meetings in the area.

August 28, 1862: "Last Friday afternoon there was an enthusiastic gathering of the people of this borough for the purpose of giving expression to the loyal feelings that seemingly pervade every breast. The Baptist Church was filled at an early hour with attentive listeners while true hearted patriots discoursed upon the wrongs to our government inflicted by the leagued confederacy of traitors and miscreants.

The Rev Symmes was the next speaker called upon. He took for his motto 'Stand Firm'. If the army of McClellan be all lost we must never give up - avoid faction - faction is danger - we must unitedly stand firm for our government. It must be sustained even with the loss of everything. There must be no truce - no compromise to the traitors with arms in their hands. Would any but a coward make compromise with the mid night assassin who presented the alternative 'Your money or your life?' Stand firm for the government - firm as the everlasting hills."

The strong political divisions which emerged at the beginning of the war began to diminish as the war intensified

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Docents Needed — In just three hours a month, you can share your love of Cranbury with Museum visitors! Docents are volunteer tour guides. She — or he! — takes visitors through the Museum pointing out highlights and providing a glimpse into Cranbury's past. No experience necessary. We are happy to train interested individuals. Please contact Lisa Beach at 409-1289.

Please Note — The final installment in the oral history series featuring the late Bill Hoffman will be included in the spring 2007 issue of the newsletter. In this last piece of the three-part series Bill takes us on a "walking" tour of Main Street!

2007 MEMBERSHIP

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: _____

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and the outcome became uncertain. The "Union Men" quickly gained popular support and communities became more united and organized to support the war.

I have heard there was support for the Confederacy in NJ but nothing in my research supports that supposition. What I found was political rhetoric much like we hear today. "Peace men" were criticized by the "Union men" as being "Secessionist" or supporters of the Confederacy. There wasn't any more tolerance for political differences then as today, each side used rhetoric to discredit their critics as disloyal or "traitorous." I guess politics hasn't changed much.

With the surrender of General Lee there was great rejoicing throughout the Northern States. But the joy would not last long. President Lincoln's assassination barely two weeks later threw the nation into a deep depression. The full tragedy of the war and the enormous loss of life quickly became apparent; 630,000 dead, the South wrecked by the war. Again people began to raise questions as to whether the war had been worth the cost of so many of their sons. The citizens of Cranbury continued their lives as they had been before the war. With the passing of generations memories of the war faded and so to the politics that had once divided the quiet "village of Cranberry."



WORLD WAR II TOPIC OF NEXT EXHIBIT

Jerry Pevahouse and DonJo Swanagan will explore World War II with an exhibit at the Museum beginning early next year. The curators are searching for items related to the war. These may include military items as well as personal items, such as souvenirs, letters home, posters, ration books and any other period items. If you have any relevant artifacts you would like to lend to the exhibit, contact either Jerry Pevahouse at 662-1247 or Don Swanagan at 395-0420.

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