



Timepiece

Volume 47, Issue 2
April-May-June 2013

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President's Message—Alycia E. Rihacek

It Might as well be Spring...

Just about now, we are all feeling that feeling... Spring Fever. The calendar says it's here, the clocks have been rolled forward ... yet Mother Nature continues to throw us a curve ball, and we need that extra layer to wear out the door in the morning and fire up the furnace when we get home. But isn't it glorious in between!

April, the month of crocus, tulips, and daffodils; surprising us each time we pop out into the garden. This miraculous renewal of our landscape... especially when we have forgotten where we have sowed them the years before... appear like magic, renewing our hope in understanding the grace in our daily lives. With this analogy, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of our Friends and Members of the Society; some we know so well, those who are revisiting us again after an absence... and those that are a new addition. It is with your support and generosity that our organization continues to grow. Each and every one of you... are truly a blessing to our organization. Springtime Joy, from your kind donations of volunteering, artifacts, oral histories and the multitude of fresh ideas from new and old acquaintances.

A recent recommendation to bring History back, during our General Membership Meetings, has proven to be a much talked about success. From the history of education in one-room schools: Cedar Grove School, and the premier of Herbert Cottrell Jr.'s Oral history, (by John Hauser) with an unannounced visit from Mr. Cottrell himself! We plan on a few more of these for Future meetings, so stop on by for our meetings schedule.

On April 28, Randall Gabrielan presented a lecture on his latest book; *Explosion At Morgan: The World War I Middlesex Munitions Disaster*. The T.A. Gillespie munitions plant explosion on the night of October 4th 1918 was a devastating catastrophe on the psyche and livelihood of many from our area. Mr. Gabrielan clearly presented the history of this traumatic event, and the hidden history that our region played in munitions manufacturing for "The War to End All Wars". It was a pleasure to work with Randy on this publication.

In conjunction with this... keep your TV tuned to the Travel Channel... our Museum hosted the film crew for the show "Mysteries at the Museum", highlighting our artifacts from the 1918 Morgan Explosion.

MEETING CALENDAR

- *Regular Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm unless otherwise noted. Upcoming meetings: April 16, May 21, June 18 (picnic)*
- *Board of Directors Meetings: 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30pm unless otherwise noted. Upcoming meetings: April 8, May 13, June 10*

**MADISON TOWNSHIP
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

OFFICERS

President, Alycia E. Rihacek
1st Vice-President, Patricia A. Schuck
2nd Vice-President, Jack Becker
Recording Secretary, Carol Dennison
Corresponding Secretary, David Johns
Treasurer, Richard J. Kujawinski

DIRECTORS

Director A, Pauline Drake
Director B, Carmela Barthine
Director C, Leona Murphy

MUSEUM CURATOR

Kathleen M. Philbrick

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Deborah Stanley

Masthead image:
Gingerbread Mantle Clock
Connecticut origin, Steam-Pressed Oak
Circa early 1900s
Accession number 6
Donated by: Mr. J. Maley

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Word of Mouth—Kate Philbrick

The most fascinating resources for local history, fact and fiction can be found in casual conversation. Without prompting, people often mention old incidents and half forgotten locals that shed a sliver of light on the past. Like any memory, such stories may be unintentionally faded with time, or details forgotten; what may be unimportant to some proves important to others, so recollections can vary. Fortunately, our township history is not so ancient, nor veiled in unfathomable mystery, that it cannot be explored and rediscovered every day.

No real coaxing is needed to stir those memories, some of which have been dormant for years. All it takes is observation of surroundings, a glance at the written word, an artifact or physical scrap to stir the memory. For instance, while driving along Texas Rd. recently with my dad, we came to a curve. He pointed at a house and mentioned, "The man who lived there used to make teeth." He provided a name along with a few facts to explore. Without this spontaneous comment, who knows if this would have ever been discovered.

We all participate in this sort of random recollection, when we pass a building or an empty lot and remember the candy shop or soda fountain on that spot we used to visit as a kid. Or maybe it was an old abandoned barn or house we dared to enter (despite parental warning!) back in childhood summers, where the shopping center or restaurant now stands. These little 'time capsules' in our heads should not be ignored. Take a moment or two to jot down those incidents or names you can recall, and pass them on to the Historical Society-- who knows? You may hold the missing piece of a puzzle, or provide info on a previously unknown piece of the past.

This is how history happens, and how we come to know about the homes and businesses no longer standing, the bootleggers, stills and gypsy camps, and even a slave cemetery somewhere in the township. Some may prove legend or rumor, others may open doors to more fully illustrating the past.

The Historical Society has an ongoing oral history project, dedicated to recording the recollections of many of our area residents. If you would like to participate in an interview, please let the president know at the next membership meeting. And, if an interview isn't for you, why not take a few moments to jot down your thoughts and mail or drop them off at museum at your convenience? Your assistance in our on-going mission is appreciated.

**Save the date
Annual Golf
Outing
Rescheduled to
September 26**



Join us for our Annual "Pot-Luck" Summer Picnic

June 18th, starts at 6PM

Members, families and guests are welcome
Get your recipes ready... don't forget to
bring a lawn chair!

RSVP with your chosen dish and number in your party to
Ann Miller (732)721-5423

Please bring "hot food—hot, and cold food—cold"
since we do not have facilities for heating or chilling.

Ann Miller / Phil McGovern, picnic co-chairs

What's In a Name—Alycia Rihacek

Why Did We Change Our Name from Madison Township to Old Bridge Township?

When we bring up this topic today... new residents do not know and many longtime residents still hold very strong opinions about the topic. I hope to present the topic as clearly as I can, and as always, I welcome all of our members to share your stories and views on “Name Change”. This is our History in all of its confounding glory. To the best of my research I will present this thesis...

To preface, we need to understand that in the late 1950's and early 1960's, the landscape of our Township was radically changing. Rural Farms were becoming Suburban tract developments. Brunswick Gardens and the Southwood development were in full swing of sales and expansion. Sayerwoods South was just starting to multiply housing units off Cindy Street and Throckmorton and Gaub Roads. A population of young families from New York and North Jersey were flocking to these modern “safer and bucolic” communities, faster than the developers could keep up. The State Highways (Route 9, Route 18) and the Garden State Parkway instigated this boom time in development. You could live in the country and be only 40 minutes from the “City or Shore”. The Township population jumped over 30% in ten years and more were coming.

By 1970, the Township administration had worked out many of the “growing pain” kinks of this sudden expansion, such as township services and offering great rates for commercial business to support the tax base of the community. The Board of Education also worked diligently to expand our elementary schools and finally building not one but two Junior & High Schools. But issues would arise from something as simple as mailing a letter.

Yes... **Postal Services!**



There is a community by the name Madison in North Jersey, which more than occasionally would receive our mail. What seems like a silly issue to us today was actually a very difficult issue for many in the 1950s through 1970s. Anyone else remember the USPS campaign of Mr. Zip or “Zippy” the mascot reminding you to “Use Zip Code the last word in the mail address”? He was a vitally important educational promotion within our state since many communities shared similar place names.

Secondly, our Township covering Forty-two square miles was served by the older smaller sub, or rural, post offices (Laurence Harbor, Matawan, Englishtown, Jamesburg, South Amboy, Parlin and Old Bridge of East Brunswick). At the time these were small facilities, some no larger than a proverbial postage stamp.

Local business on the along Route 9 had a great deal of trouble getting local mailings out in a timely manner, including our local houses of worship. The Village of Old Bridge Post Office, on Main Street in East Brunswick, was extremely overburdened when St. Thomas Church would drop off its weekly mailings to parishioners, and the Township Tax Office did not enjoy the refrain: “it must have been lost in the Mail”. So something had to change... but what?

Someone in the township administration suggested that we needed our own larger postal processing facility within the bounds of the Township proper. A committee was formed; residents, business owners and representatives from all of the houses of worship participated. Letters were sent to USPS Agency requesting advice... one response was to fix the issue concerning duplicate Place Name, and there “might” be an opportunity for the Government to find a new location within our town, if it was economically feasible.

This began the debate... Can we really change our name?

Till next time... **Veracity, vitriol and voters.**



WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE??? (More Thoughts on the Name Change) - Alycia Rihacek

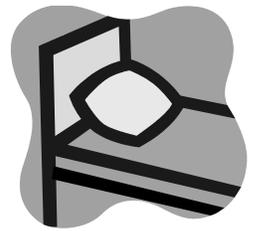
While Madison Township was facing a Postal Crisis, Bicentennial Fever was sweeping the Nation; “New Jersey: Crossroads of the American Revolution”. George Washington and his troops were advertised to have slept in more locations throughout the State than documented proof existed. And alas, the tiny Village of Old Bridge, in East Brunswick, that dated back to the 1600s must surely have been a location of some historic Revolutionary event, be it Loyalist or Patriot. (The Village has a rich history dating back to Obadiah Herbert as one of the early landowners... and progenitor of the many interconnecting Founding Families of our Township, including the children of Thomas Warne the Proprietor).

Sometime in the past, the Lore of a letter sent by General Washington, during those abysmal days at the Battle of Monmouth... for his “troops to meet at The Old Bridge” became a strongly held oral history by many of the families in the Village and South Old Bridge. Unfortunately, we have not found any documented proof that General Washington ever sent these orders. If such an epistle did exist during that historic time, contemporary researchers believe it would have been in southern Monroe Township, but no further north than Spotswood, as a likely location of expedient encampment at the Monmouth Battleground.

Recent evidence as to the origin of this “Lore” comes from an 1875 (the Centennial) news article for the promotion of a “Garden City” of town called “Herbert” by the Bennett Improvement Co., that was proposed for a vast acreage of land in the Runyon Watershed and what is present day Southwood development. Although many were lured from NY, and other parts of the metropolitan area, to come and see this prospective bucolic community... it never came to fruition, quite possibly blocked by our own proprietor descendants. (I’m still researching this tidbit of the mystery). However, 1875 is the first documented publication of the “meet at the Old Bridge” lore that we have found... and it is our hope that other researchers may take up the call to find the Truth of the story.

(Oh, and the Story as to the Old Bridge that crossed the South River... even this topic as to “the OLD Bridge” location is still up for debate).

But in the 1970’s... anything was good enough for bringing in tourists and or preventing old family homesteads from developer demolition by having Molly Pitcher’s Well in your backyard or good ol’ General Washington and his troops haunting the backroom davenport.



Just Asking....Kate Philbrick

As a member of a local historical organization, do you visit museums? Not everyone will admit that their vacations or holidays are spent visiting historic sites, parks, homes and the like, especially when theme parks, gardens, and other entertainments vie for tourist dollars. Many of us can recall as kids those stops along the road for historical markers, sometimes just to break the monotony of long road trips to see the relatives. This can sometimes generate a lifelong interest in practical ‘time travel’.

Are you one of those travelers? Do you seek out historic homes, gardens and other sites whenever possible? What do you look for? What museum was your favorite, perhaps revisited every chance you get? Do you attend reenactments, such as Royal Governor Franklin’s arrest at the Proprietary House, the Lindbergh Kidnapping Trial, or the Battle of Gettysburg? (by the way, the 150 year anniversary of Gettysburg is this July—would love to hear a report from someone who is attending!)

As curator of the Thomas Warne Museum, and frequent ‘time traveler’, I am always looking for new ideas for exhibits, inspiration for new special displays and ways to improve the public’s experience. One of the best feelings is to have visitors return again and again, sometimes bringing friends for their first look, or school children bringing mom and dad after having been on a class trip. A visit to a museum should be a living, vibrant and positive experience that encourages another visit, membership and support.

Have you suggestions for a special exhibit? Or is there the memory of a particular site or museum you would like to share? What makes a good museum experience? Your input is much appreciated---please write or visit on a weekend and share.

IN MEMORIAM:

Our condolences to the families of recently deceased members of the Madison Twp. Historical Society:

- Sylvia Lubar, mother of Carol Dennison
- Holly Bianchi, long time member and author of several local history books
- Howard Drake, loving husband of Pauline and long time active member



A Bit of Sunshine: Get Well Soon

Pauline Drake
Sylvia Marcin
Carol Kosobucki
Chet Philbrick



Friday Volunteers Always Welcome

Help
Wanted

- Can YOU Volunteer just "**ONE**" Friday at the Museum in 2013? We're fortunate to have some very faithful regulars such as Leona Murphy, Joan Gibson, Ann Miller and Jack Becker, who do it every month.
- Others such as Carol Kosobucki, Sylvia Marcin and Mary Sohor come in frequently. Will you be able to do it **ONCE** this Year? The reward is really feeling like a part of the Museum, not just a member.
- Please call Pat 732-566-5029.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

July 26-28

A new MTHS fundraiser

Member-made crafts will be displayed in the museum during regular hours

An opportunity to do some early holiday shopping



This program is made possible by

Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission

with funding in part from

New Jersey Historical Commission

a Division in the Dept of State



ONE LUMP OR TWO? - The Annual Tea with Mrs. Lincoln—Pat Schuck

The Annual Tea with Mrs. Lincoln is a team event. It all begins when Leona and I consult the calendar and set the date. Judi Cox and Paul Serge were contacted to assure their availability to play their parts. Carmela printed the tickets, which went on sale at the January General Meeting and announcement in the Newsletter. This year we were sold out by 2-14-13.



- ◆ Mary Koutis and her daughter So-So made and donated delightful program covers, tea cup accessories and tea cup pins. We welcomed these additions to our tea tables.
- ◆ Deb Stanley designed, made and donated pocket tissue holders.
- ◆ Leona and Joan Gibson wrapped over 40 door prizes, which had been donated, many from Jane Stager.
- ◆ Alycia was in charge of the sound system, a new addition to better our program.
- ◆ Carmela printed menus.
- ◆ Linda of Cheesequake Farms donated all the potted plants. Everyone got one to take home.
- ◆ Our elegant tables were set by Deb Stanley, Joan Beamish, Lee Murphy, Betty Green, Dot Hauser and Pat Schuck.
- ◆ The delicious savories and sweets were prepared and donated by Betty Green, Joan Gibson, Joan Beamish, Dot Hauser, Lee Murphy, Carol Kosobucki and Pat Schuck.
- ◆ Thanks to Joann Kujawinski for her tea urns and to the HOT WATER ladies Dot Hauser and Carmela Barthine.
- ◆ Our great thanks to Curator Kate Philbrick and David Johns for clearing the space and setting up tables and chairs.
- ◆ We had many volunteer servers: Dayna, Chris Aboia, Betty Green, Deb Stanley, Lee Murphy, Joan Beamish and Alycia Rihachek.
- ◆ Donations from Jack Becker, Sylvia Marcin, Ann Miller and Mayor Owen Henry were gratefully accepted.
- ◆ Mary Sohor and Alycia were behind the scenes of preparations.
- ◆ Thank you to my husband Don for tolerating me and for doing a great job as parking lot attendant.
- ◆ To all of you who bought tickets, we hope you enjoyed yourselves. We'll see you next year for another "SWEET TEA".

SPRING CLEANING COMMITTEE

Our dedicated volunteers have announced the reestablishment of our Cleaning and Reorganization Corps! To better serve our membership, the public and preserve our archives, it's time to clean the clutter (non-cataloged accessions, tools & appliances or personal items) and have a full accounting of what we have on hand for the benefit of a tidy and accessible in-house storage plan for future events and projects.

First on the list... our office and work room spaces. There are many personal items that have been left here over the course of many member visits. Though we applaud your "eco-friendly" spirit, we can't handle any more mugs!! We want to thank everyone for the generous donations of items left with us, but if you have any personal possessions at the museum that are not intended for permanent donation or possible disposal, can you please, please, please remove them as soon as possible.

This is your official notice (starting on May 21st). We plan to start the weekend of June 22 and will consolidate and rework the storage areas in the office and workroom, as well as giving both areas a good spring cleaning. We hope to maximize the storage and make both areas more user-friendly both for everyday and for future events. Thank you from "your cleaning crew"!

Madison Township Historical Society Meeting Schedule **2013**

Regular Meetings: at 7:00pm (Held the 3rd Tuesday of the Month unless otherwise noted)

- January 15
- February 19
- March 19
- April 16
- May 21
- June 18—picnic
- July/August—no meetings
- September 17
- October 15—
Founder's Day
- November 19
- December Luncheon

Board of Directors: at 7:30pm (Held the 2nd Monday of the Month unless otherwise noted)

- January 14
- February 11
- March 11
- April 8
- May 13
- June 10
- July 8
- August 12
- September 9
- October 14
- November 11
- December 9

Madison Township Historical Society **2013 Membership Form**

Regular annual membership dues for the year 2013 in the Madison Township Historical Society (MTHS) are \$15 per person.

Dues are due by April 1st, 2013.

To renew or apply for a new membership, please complete this form and make payment in person at the Thomas Warne Museum or mail this complete form along with check or money order (Please Do Not Mail Cash) made payable to:

Madison Township Historical Society—(memo note: *“Membership”*)

Mail to:

Membership Committee
Madison Township Historical Society
4216 Route 516
Matawan, NJ 07747



Please Print

Check One

2013 Renewal

New Member

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Would you like to receive your Newsletter via Email? Yes No

Would you like to be a MTHS Committee Volunteer? Yes No

Would you like to be a Museum Volunteer? Yes No

For Office Use:

Cash

Check/MO#

AMOUNT PAID

RECEIPT



Thomas Warne Museum & Library



“The Little Red School House”
across from the Old Bridge
Township High School Complex.

We welcome all questions and
information pertaining to local
family genealogy, township
history, historic buildings and
archeological findings.

Community groups and school
tours available by appointment.

Home of the
Madison Township Historical Society,
serving Old Bridge Township.

Open to the Public
Fridays—Noon-4PM
Saturday & Sunday Noon-6PM

PHONE: 732-566-2108

FAX: 732-566-6943

Visit Our Web Site

www.thomas-warne-museum.com

and Join Us on Facebook

Madison Township Historical Society

4216 Route 516

Matawan, NJ 07747

