



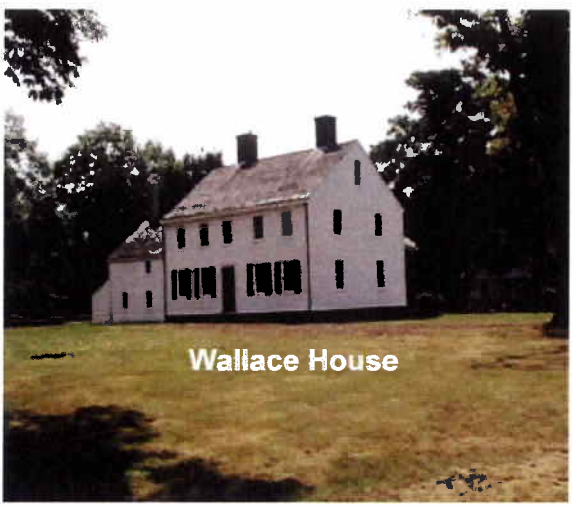
# The Link

*joining the sites along the rivers*

Volume 10, Issue 1

**The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance**

Summer 2008



**Wallace House**

## SUNDAY SERIES LUNCHEON / LECTURE

Monique Rubens Krohn, Executive Director for the Heritage Trail Association, will address the RMHA on the topic **“The Second Middlebrook Encampment”** at our Sunday Series Luncheon / Lecture to be held Sunday, September 21, 2008 from 1:30 to 3:00 PM at Pheasants Landing Restaurant, Pub & Catering, 311 Amwell Road (Route 514), Hillsborough, NJ 08844 (Phone 908-281-1288). Reservations are required. The Luncheon cost is \$30.00. To reserve call Elyce Jennings after September 7 at 732-463-0767.

## *The Wallace House* by Donald Johnstone Peck

During the Second Middlebrook Encampment, from December 11, 1778, to June 3, 1779, General George Washington leased the Wallace House for his headquarters. The Second Encampment at Middlebrook is the least known of the Revolutionary War campaigns in New Jersey. However, it was crucial to the outcome of the Revolution. Washington chose the area because it was a defensible one, with a good network of roads, plenty of timber for the soldiers' huts, and a sympathetic populace. Because of its mild winter and lesser hardships of a better fed, better clothed, and better trained army, this lower tension did not make it any less important to Washington's strategy and ultimate victory.

Following the Battle of Monmouth, Washington anticipated the next major thrust by the British from their New York stronghold would be northward. He positioned his army to repulse an advance, but nothing happened. There were

several British forays into war torn New Jersey, but Sir Henry Clinton did not attempt any decisive action. (Clinton would later determine Middlebrook too strong and Washington's 10,000 troops too numerous to be "rashly attempted" with his force of 22,000 in the New York and Rhode Island area.)

Late in November 1778, with winter coming on, Washington moved his army back to New Jersey. Some detachments were stationed at Pompton and Elizabethtown; the main body of the army came with him to the Raritan Valley.

The Continental Army of about 10,000 men was equal to the entire population of Somerset County. To minimize its impact, the brigades were assigned to locations several miles apart: Maryland to the east of Middlebrook, Virginia on the west, Pennsylvania across the Raritan on the west side of the Millstone River, and the

Artillery at Pluckemin. Other encampments were garrisoned along a 75-mile-long line from Middlebrook to Ramapo, West Point, and Fishkill to Danbury in Western Connecticut. Under orders from Washington, a series of 23 bonfire signal-beacon sites were built to warn the American militia to arms in the event of any advance of British troops. These orders were carried out under the leadership of Major General William Alexander of Somerset County, generally known by his Scottish title of Lord Stirling. (George Washington referred to Alexander as "my Lord".)

John Wallace, a wealthy fabric importer and merchant from Philadelphia, had his house eight-room addition constructed in between 1775 and 1776 next to an earlier small farmhouse. It is one of the best and most original examples of Georgian architecture in New Jersey and was one of the largest houses constructed in the state

The next scheduled Meeting of the

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

(Alliance Sites are encouraged  
to send their representatives)

September 18, 2008

From 1:30-3:00 PM

**ABRAHAM STAATS HOUSE**

17 Von Steuben Lane

South Bound Brook, NJ

To be excused Directors should contact

Carol Natarelli or Marilyn Rautio

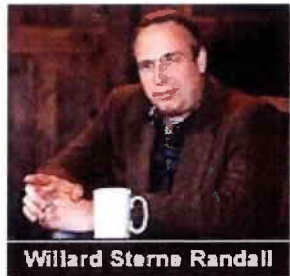
**STANDING ROOM ONLY**

The Sunday Series Lecture/Reception at historic **Proprietary House** last May 18 was the best-attended event the Alliance has held in recent years. Distinguished Scholar in History and Pulitzer Prize nominated author, **Willard Sterne Randall**, commanded the attention of

RMHA and Proprietary House Association members as well as students receiving awards from RMHA's first essay contest.

Randall's book, "**A LITTLE REVENGE:**

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AT WAR WITH HIS SON**", according to Princeton University author and professor, Arthur Link, "is the major work about two of the most important men in American history". The suggestion donation of \$10.00 per person benefited the Alliance's **GUIDE TO HISTORIC SITES IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY**.



Willard Sterne Randall

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The Board of Directors meets the third Thursday of March, May, September, October and November at designated historic and museum member sites in the region.

**YOUR LINK TO THE PUBLIC:** *The Link* is on a quarterly publication schedule. News of major upcoming events for possible placement in the newsletter may be mailed, emailed or faxed to the address that follows.

Any questions please contact: Donald J. Peck, Editor at The Clausen Company, P. O. Box 140, Fords, NJ 08863 or phone 732-738-1165, fax 732-738-1618, or E-mail [clausenco@aol.com](mailto:clausenco@aol.com).

during the Revolution. The Dutch-framed mansion fronted the Old York Road, one of the main highways across New Jersey, connecting New York and Philadelphia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Washington chose the Wallace House because of its strategic location and amenities. Generals and their aides were quartered in the homes of nearby residents. It became a New Jersey State historic site in 1947.

Washington spent six months here, except for a six-week trip to Philadelphia, where he addressed Congress. Martha Washington, as was her custom, joined her husband on February 5, 1779 after his return, and stayed there through the spring.

Through the assistant quartermaster at Philadelphia, the Washingtons ordered a new set of china and “six tolerably genteel but not expensive candle-sticks”. Here they enjoyed graciously entertaining. “Lady Kitty” Livingston and her sister, Mrs. John Jay, were frequent guests. Other distinguished visitors included the Marquis de Lafayette, Baron von Steuben, Alexander Hamilton and Benedict Arnold. The Washingtons also socialized with prominent citizens in the area, including the



**Old Dutch Parsonage**

Reverend Jacob R. Hardenburg, Pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Reverend Hardenburg had sold the farmstead, “Hope Farm,” of 107 acres near his parsonage (Old Dutch Parsonage, built of Holland brick for the Reverend

John Frelinghuysen) to John Wallace in 1775 to build a summer residence in the tranquility of Somerset County. Hardenburg was a strong supporter of independence and instrumental in the formation of Queens College, serving as its first president in 1785. The theological classes held at Old Dutch Parsonage were the beginning of Queen’s College. [Historic Rutgers was the eighth college established in the American colonies. Chartered in 1766 as Queens College, it was first named for the consort of Britain’s King George III. The College was renamed in 1825 to honor Colonel Henry Rutgers, a benefactor and Revolutionary War veteran. It became the State University in 1945.]

Sometimes at the end of the day when a low sun is streaming through the panes of the window in Washington’s small library at the southwest corner of Wallace House, one can see the shadowy figure of Major Caleb Gibbs, the commandant of an elite corps of about 144 men who served as the equivalent of Washington’s secret service, guarding him, his staff, and his papers.

It was at Wallace House that George Washington planned the successful Indian Campaign of 1779 against the Iroquois League, fierce allies of the British. With the war in the colonies at something of a standstill, Washington decided to dispatch troops to northern Pennsylvania and western New York State, where the Iroquois Indians’ Six Nations Confederation and Loyalist forces were attacking American frontier towns and outposts. Major General John Sullivan’s forces of about 4,000 Continental army troops drove the Iroquois to Fort Niagara, the British stronghold. Thus they allowed the American colonists to push westward and populate the region.

The winter and spring of 1779 passed quietly. The weather was mild and fine; the spirits of the troops were excellent. Except for endemic fighting along the Hackensack in Bergen County, there

was little military movement in New Jersey or elsewhere to the north.

Threats of an enemy attack on



West Point pulled the Americans out of Middlebrook on June 3, 1779, for a forced march to the Hudson, but attack never came. With Washington absent from New Jersey, Colonel John Graves Simcoe, Commander of the Queen’s Rangers, staged a terrifying raid in October 1779, pounding through the Raritan and Millstone Valleys in a dash that many historians have labeled the most daring single event of the war. He and his Rangers covered fifty-five miles in a single night. Simcoe was captured but most of the Rangers made it to safety.

With the close of an uneventful 1779 summer campaign, Washington again selected Morristown, New Jersey as the site for his winter encampment. There he could keep a watchful eye on the British in New York City and be in a position to move by well-guarded routes either to the Hudson or the Delaware. The several divisions of his army constructed the villages of huts in Jockey Hollow, three miles southwest of town while Washington and his official family occupied the Ford Mansion on the outskirts of Morristown.

The winter was the most severe since 1755 and much worse than that of 1778 at Valley Forge. The prospect of ultimate victory seemed distant.

