



Volume 9, Issue 2

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Fall 2007

JOYCE KILMER

Excerpts By

The late Dr. Richard G. Durnin who served as
Middlesex County Historian,
Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commissioner
And Proprietary House Association Trustee

Joyce Kilmer spent twenty years of his life on New Brunswick. His parents were Frederick Barnett Kilmer (1851-1934) and Annie Kilburn Kilmer (c.1852-1932). Dr. Frederick B. Kilmer was a chemist who joined the new Johnson and Johnson Company in 1889, manufacturers of surgical supplies established in 1886. At J & J he became head of the Scientific Department and is credited with developing the famous J & J baby powder.

The Kilmers were communicants of historic Christ Church (Episcopal), New Brunswick and Joyce Kilmer and his wife Aline Murray Kilmer were married in June of 1908 at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Metuchen.

Joyce Kilmer first taught English and Latin at Morristown High School, NJ but subsequently went to work for Funk and Wagnalls Publishing Company and later, in 1913, the *New York Times*. There he worked on the Sunday magazine section and wrote several book reviews.

In April of 1914, Kilmer joined the 7th Regiment, New York National Guard. He enlisted in the army in August of 1917, and was with the 165th Infantry, part of the famous 43rd or "Rainbow Division." In October of 1917 he was off for service in France and promoted to the rank of sergeant in March of 1918. Kilmer was killed in action July 30, 1918 and is buried in a military cemetery at Fere-en-Tardenois, France. The French government awarded him a posthumous award of the Crois de Guerre. An editorial on Joyce Kilmer appeared in the *New York Times* of Sunday, August 25, 1918: "His was a fine career – and his country and his country's literature are not apt to forget him." Poet, essayist and author of one play, six published volumes appeared during his lifetime. "Trees" was the poem that early established his reputation. School children since the 1920s have heard, learned or sung it.

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Joyce Kilmer

Joyce Kilmer A Literary Biography 141



THE SUNDAY SERIES

Buffet Luncheon and
"For the Kilmers" Program
Sunday, November 18, 2007
at 1:00 pm
Reservations Required
Call Elyce Jennings 732-463-0767

**The Heldrich Hotel
and Conference Center**
10 Livingston Avenue
(between George and New Streets)
New Brunswick, NJ

The guest speaker, author John Covell, will speak on The Kilmers and his new book, *JOYCE KILMER A Literary Biography*. A book signing will also be held. Noted guests will include members of the Kilmer Family, distinguished Founder of The Heldrich Hotel, John J. Heldrich and Dr. Harvey J. Brudner, Chair of the Joyce Kilmer Centennial Commission.

**UPCOMING SCHEDULED MEETINGS
OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Alliance Sites are encouraged to send their
Representative

OCTOBER 18, 2007 FROM 1:30-3:00 PM

**Griggstown Historical Society
At the GRIGGSTOWN SCHOOLHOUSE**
(behind the Griggstown reformed Church)
1056 Canal Road
Griggstown, NJ
Phone 908-359-3589

Circa 1833, the Griggstown Schoolhouse was the first school serving Griggstown residents of Franklin Township. It closed in 1932 and in 1960 was moved behind the Church's Parish Hall. Hosts will show a wonderful new video of this historic schoolhouse produced by the Franklin Foundation in memory of Betty Scott, RMHA longtime board member, researcher, writer, and contributor to The Link.

**NOVEMBER 15, 2007 FROM 1:30-
3:00 PM**

Sayreville Historical Society Museum
425 Main Street
Sayreville, NJ
Phone 732-390-7048

The Sayreville Historical Society Museum is housed in what was originally the first school in Sayreville, known as School #1, which was built in 1885. The Museum displays numerous objects from local history such as a printing press room, railroad memorabilia, Native American artifacts, items related to the Sayre and Fisher Brickworks, and the beautiful amber resin indigenous to Sayreville. Guest speaker is Chris Phelan, President of the Middlesex County Regional Chamber of Commerce.



**SAVE THE DATE
FOR THE MOST MAGICAL OF
EVENINGS! RMHA'S GALA
YEAR-END BENEFIT
IRISH TENORS CHRISTMAS
SHOW**

Sunday, December 9, 2007 at 7 PM

This Gala is the Alliance's first major fundraiser, supporting the work of publishing the **GUIDE BOOK TO HISTORIC SITES IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY**. Tickets are \$60.00. Please call (732) 738-5522 to reserve yours now! The State Theatre, which attracts up to 300,000 people each year, is one of Central New Jersey's outstanding tourist attractions and The Irish Tenors Christmas Show is the most popular show of every season!

**Raritan-Millstone Heritage
Alliance**
P. O. Box 5583
Somerset, N.J. 08875-5583

*An organization of individuals,
organizations and sites
working to promote preservation
and understanding of the rich
eventful and cultural heritage
of significant historical,
educational and cultural sites
located in Central New Jersey*

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

The Edison Job Corps Academy recently named the school's campus library in honor of the literary legacy of Joyce Kilmer, New Brunswick's most famous writer. The one-room library is decorated with memorabilia about Kilmer, the journalist for the *New York Times*, and World War I officer, best known for his poem "Trees." Sgt. Joyce Kilmer was born December 6, 1886 and died in an heroic attack on a German machine-gun nest at the Battle of Chateau Thierry in France. Named Alfred Joyce Kilmer, he preferred to be called Joyce Kilmer. He was educated at the Rutgers Preparatory School and Rutgers College but graduated from Columbia University, New York. His military exploits persuaded the U.S. Department of the Army to name its nearby World-War-II embarkation base in Piscataway as Camp Kilmer.

"TREES"

I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree



JOYCE KILMER HOUSE

17 Joyce Kilmer Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ

Joyce Kilmer's birthplace was originally a Dutch farmhouse built in 1780, with Greek revival additions dating from the 1830's. It is considered one of the oldest remaining structures in New Brunswick. Tel: 732-745-5117, Hours: By Appointment, Parking: Street.

**CONGRADULATIONS TO THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE FOR
THE SUNDAY SERIES PROGRAM OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2007**

More than 80 RMHA members together with members of the Reformed Churches of the greater Millstone River Valley, the Griggstown Historical Society and the Van Harlingen Historical Society and many other music lovers from Princeton to Summit, NJ gathered at historic Hillsborough Reformed Church at Millstone, NJ to hear Dr. Davis Folkerts perform on the Charles M. Ruggles, Opus 22, organ here. The concert and reception following of Dutch desserts celebrated 300 years of Dutch culture in Somerset County.

The Hillsborough (Dutch) Reformed Church has a long and distinguished history. The beautiful Federal Style church, built in 1828, is the second edifice erected by the church's congregation, organized in 1766. The Ruggles organ, a mechanical action or "tracker action" organ similar to those found in 16-18 century Holland, was dedicated in 1991 on the occasion of the church's 225th anniversary.

A special thanks for this program's success goes to John and Nancy Allen, Kathryn Stryker and Carol Natarelli and the members of the Program Committee.



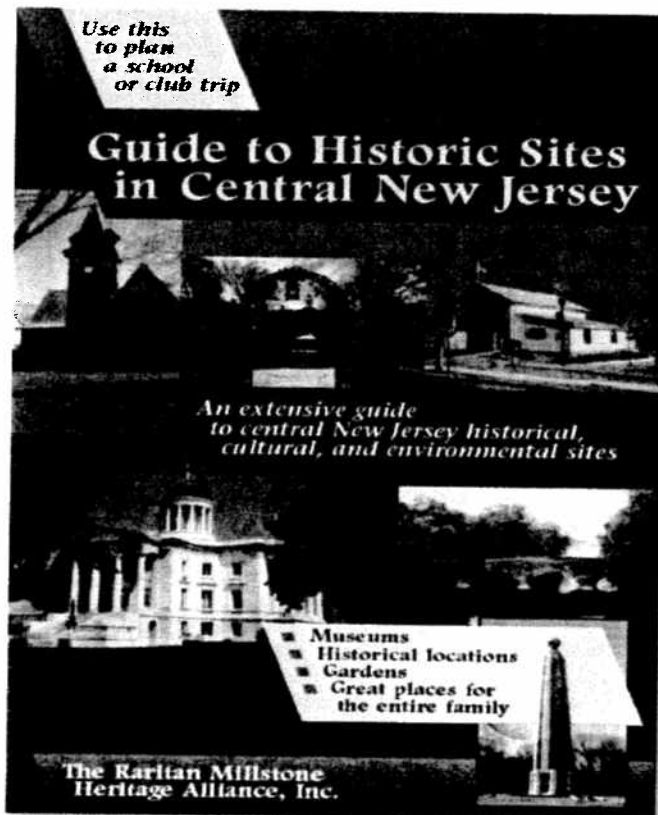
**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT ABRAHAM AND ANN SUYDAM, THE REV. EVERETT ZABRISKI III,
DR. DAVIS AND EUNICE FOLKERTS, THE REV. FRED MULLER, AND DONALD PECK**

WELCOME NEW DIRECTORS

At the September 20, 2007 meeting of the Board of Directors the following persons were elected to the Board. **Kathleen Manning DePow**, Perth Amboy City Historian, Chair of Perth Amboy's 325th Anniversary celebration in 2008, past Vice President of the Board of Education, Commissioner and Chairman of the Perth Amboy Housing Authority, and Co-chair of Perth Amboy's Katrina Gulf Coast Relief Project. She will serve on RMHA's Program/Public Relations/ Fundraising Committee.

Also elected was **Susan Cerulo Keating** of Monroe Township, recently retired as acting Principal at Perth Amboy High School and Assistant Superintendent of Schools, honored by the Middlesex County Commission on the status of Women as a Woman of Excellence, she is past president of the Middlesex County Principals and Supervisors Association. A catalyst for annual awards for media presentations and exhibit awards, she has been Executive Producer of Channel 34 Television and presently serves on the Woodbridge Cable Commission. She will serve on RMHA's Program/Public Relations/ Fundraising Committee (including educational awards presented at the Annual meeting) and the 2009 Guide Book Committee.

Also elected was **William F. Lynch** of Cranbury, recently retired as President of GROUP USA, New York, NY and former Senior Vice President & General Merchandising Manager of Saks Fifth Avenue, New York, NY. He is a distinguished senior executive dedicated to building and motivating cross-functional teams that exceed expectations. He will serve on RMHA's Finance & Operations Committee and is Chair of RMHA's Christmas Gala "Irish tenors" on December 9, 2007, 7 pm at the State Theatre, New Brunswick.



DID YOU KNOW that in 1730 New Brunswick was named in honor of the ascension of the House of Brunswick (a German duchy of the House of Hanover) to the throne of Great Britain in the person of King George I?

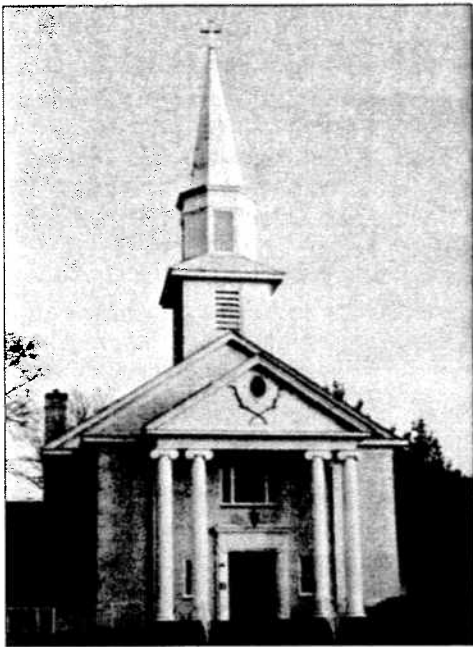
DID YOU KNOW that Queens College, founded in 1766, was named for Queen Charlotte – wife to King George III and is the 8th oldest of the nine colleges in the United States founded before the American Revolution?

DID YOU KNOW that State Theatre in New Brunswick is a magnificently renovated 1800 seat, 1921 vaudeville theatre presenting a diversity of world-class events including the RMHA Christmas gala "Irish Tenors" on December 9, 2007 at 7 pm?

DID YOU KNOW that the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick is one of America's most important university museums with over 50,000 works of art and an interactive learning center for children and the family?

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 below. Any questions, please contact: Donald J. Peck, Editor, 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.



THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By

Donald Johnstone Peck

Robert J. McEwen, Woodbridge historian and co-author of three books "Images of America – Woodbridge," died September 10, 2007. A leader of the Woodbridge Historical Association of Woodbridge Township, he was an elder of the First Presbyterian Church and Superintendent of its cemetery. He shepherded an application to place the church on the state registry of historic places.

The First Presbyterian Church (Old White Church) was established in 1669 and the first church built in 1675 on the 'Kirk green.' The Reverend Dr. Azel Roe, pastor had preached independence from the pulpit as had John Witherspoon of Princeton. A Scottish-born Presbyterian, Roe had no love for the English. He had taken part in one of the skirmishes at Blazing Star (now Carteret) and was captured by the British and imprisoned for a time at the old Sugar House in New York City.

Graves in the historic burying grounds of this church include several generations of descendants of John Pike who was among the original settlers of Woodbridge and who signed the 1666 Articles of Agreement with New Jersey's first English Governor, Philip Carteret. (Pike's descendant, General Zebulon Montgomery Pike discovered 14,110-foot high Pike's Peak in the Rocky Mountains near Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1806.)

The graves of prominent patriots of the American Revolution War include Brigadier General Nathaniel Heard who commanded the Middlesex County Militia that arrested Royal Governor William Franklin on June 19, 1776 at the Proprietary House, Perth Amboy. Other American Revolutionary War officers include Colonel Benjamin Brown, Colonel Samuel Crow, General Clarkson Edgar, Captain David Edgar, Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph and Lieutenant James Paten and a host of others.

IN THE NEWS

Trenton – The historic **New Jersey Statehouse** received more than \$250,000 in repairs this summer, including work in the Senate where a chunk of plaster crashed down from the ceiling and a decorative skylight sprung a leak. Still left undone are nearly \$100 million needed repairs to the building. New Jersey's Statehouse is the second oldest Statehouse in continuous use in the nation.

Perth Amboy – **The historic Royal Governor's Mansion, the Proprietary House** is the only remaining original official royal governors residence still standing the Thirteen Colonies. It is a property of the State of New Jersey and its most significant colonial historic site. The roof of the wing of the residence of the last royal governor of New Jersey, William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, is in a very tenuous condition and the entire building is in need of extensive renovation.

Piscataway – **East Jersey Olde Towne Village's** mini-exhibit, "Caught in the Crossfire: Churches, Taverns and Revolution in New Jersey" will be on display at the **The Indian Queen Tavern** through March 7, 2008.

Piscataway – the oldest publicly owned building in Middlesex County, **The Metlar-Bodine House Museum**, has a near -\$1 Million 21st century veneer restoring its appearance to vignettes of its 279 – year history prior to its near-disastrous late-evening July 17, 2003 fire. The ochre exterior now also enhances the 1839s **Livingston-Waldron Manor House** in Highland Park, the centerpiece of the Park's **Livingston Manor Historic District**.

Tottenville, Staten Island – **The Conference House**, circa 1685, (also part of the Colony of East Jersey when it was built) will celebrate its annual "**Grand Illumination**" and **Colonial Christmas Event**, Friday, December 7 and 9. For information telephone 718-984-6046.

SAVE THE DATE

October 19,20,26 & 27 – Haunted Lakeview performance/Tour in the transformed haunted mansion. Buckelew Park, Lakeview Mansion, 203 Buckelew Avenue, Jamesburg; 5-9; \$5; Lakeview Players and the Jamesburg Historical Association; 732-521-2040; www.jamesburghistory.com

November 3 – Princeton Annual House Tour featuring six homes in Princeton, including the house in which T.S. Eliot stayed while a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study and Woodrow Wilson's Tudor Revival-style home, 10-4, Tickets \$30, can be purchased in advance from the Historical Society of Princeton at 158 Nassau Street, Princeton, 609-921-6748 or visiting www.princetonhistory.org

November 15, 1:30-3:30 pm at the Sayreville Historical Society Museum, 425 Main Street, Sayreville, Christopher J. Phelan will be guest speaker at the RMHA Board of Directors meeting. To gain insight into the numerous challenges and opportunities that face the State, Middlesex County and Central New Jersey, visit www.platformforprogress.com. Members and Sites are encouraged to attend.

December 1, 10-1 pm – Griggstown Historical Society "Greens and Goodies Sale" at the Griggstown School House, Canal Road, Griggstown, NJ. Don't miss this event!

December 2 at 6:00 pm – Handel's "Messiah" – New Brunswick Chamber Orchestra featuring the choirs and soloists of Christ Church, Emanuel Lutheran, and First Reformed; Mark Trautman, conductor, at historic Christ Church in New Brunswick; \$17/ \$15 students & seniors; call 732-249-6999 for tickets/information: www.music@christchurchnewbrunswick.org.

December 9 – Rockingham Holiday Tours every half hour with last tour at 3:30 pm. Advance reservations are required. Please call 609-683-7236 and leave a message (starting Nov. 24). 11-4; Rockingham State Historical Site, Laurel Avenue, Kingston. www.rockingham.net.

December 15 & 16 – "Holiday at the Abraham Staats House," South Bound Brook. Community organizations decorate rooms of the Staats House for the holidays. The nearby Hendrick Fisher House is also decorated for the holidays. For more information: www.staatshouse.com.

THE OLD FARMER'S ALLMANAC

The Allmanac predicts that 2008 will be the warmest year in a century. This is in sharp contrast to the winter of 1780 when more than 20 successive snowstorms blasted New Jersey's hills and slopes with six-or-seven foot snowdrifts. So intense, so prolonged was the cold of that winter that streams froze and local mills could not grind grain for Washington's ill-clad starving troops at Jockey Hollow. There, with the barest of protection from the cold, hands and feet frozen, they experienced more cruel privations by far that did those who served at Valley Forge.