



# The Link

*joining the sites along the rivers*

Volume 8, Issue 4

## The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Spring, 2007

### JACOBUS VANDERVEER HOUSE

Village of Pluckemin

BEDMINSTER TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

By

Donald Johnstone Peck

President Emeritus, Proprietary House Association

Vice President, Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

The idyllic countryside of fertile rolling hills watered by the North Branch of the Raritan and Lamington Rivers that comprises Bedminster Township was settled shortly after Somerset County was formed in 1688. Title to the land was conveyed to East Jersey Proprietors Dr. John Johnstone and George Willocks of Perth Amboy whose grant of some 11,000 acres here would be known as the "Peapack Patent" of 1701, the foundation of most of the land titles in Bedminster ever since. Who were the East Jersey Proprietors?

In March 1664, Stuart King Charles II of England gave to his brother James, the Duke of York (later King James II) all of Dutch-occupied New Jersey. With lavish generosity the Duke of York granted what is now New Jersey to John, Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret on June 23, 1664. These two Proprietors had served the royal cause of Restoration in England during the trying years of the Civil War and the Commonwealth. The Duke bestowed the name Nova Caesarea or New Jersey in sentimental gratitude because Carteret had stoutly defended the Isle of Jersey in the English Channel for the Royalists in the English Civil War, in 1649, that had temporarily unseated the Stuarts in the 1640s.



Sir George Carteret

The Proprietors Berkeley for West Jersey and Carteret for East Jersey were holders of extensive powers. Except for certain restrictions in their charters, proprietors were given powers almost as great as the powers of the king over a royal province. They could appoint

public officials, create courts, issue laws, and impose customs, dues and regulations. Most important, they owned the land and could sell it, lease it, or collect quit-rents or fees from land users.

Following the death of Sir George Carteret on January 14, 1680, his widow, Elizabeth, to pay Sir George's debts, on February 1 and 2, 1682 sold the Province of East Jersey for 3,400 English pounds to William Penn and eleven English associates. Very shortly thereafter twelve other men, half of them from Scotland, were brought into the project. Thus East Jersey became the common property of "Twenty Four Proprietors,"

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#### MAY 17, 2007

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Toucan Grill 5:00-6:30 pm  
QUALITY INN  
1850 Easton Ave. & 287  
Somerset, NJ  
Phone 732-469-5050

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

**OFFICERS**

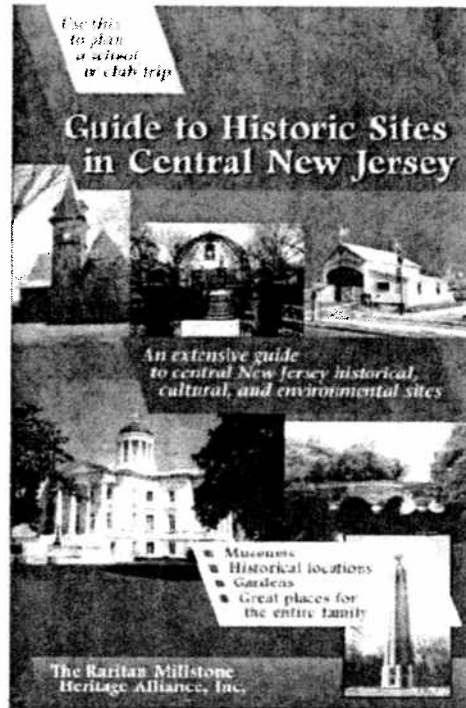
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2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (President  
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The Board of Directors meets the  
third Thursday of March, May,  
September, October  
and November at  
Designated historic and museum  
member sites in the region.

## 2006 Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance Guide Book



The latest edition of the Guide to Historic Sites in Central New Jersey is now available. The Guide comprises listings for 141 historic, cultural, and environmental sites including libraries, museums, gardens, historic districts, and historic houses throughout Middlesex, Somerset, and Mercer Counties.

Copies are available at many member sites and area locations. If you would like a copy sent to you, please forward \$2 to cover postage to RMHA, PO Box 5583, Somerset, N.J. 08873-5583. For more information, contact the Link editor or email us at [info@raritanmillstone.org](mailto:info@raritanmillstone.org). Encourage your friends and family to pick up a Guide and explore our shared heritage!



twenty of whom were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers). The Duke of York issued a patent confirming their rights to both soil and government in March 1683. Perth Amboy, founded in 1683, became the capital of the province, the home of the resident proprietors and headquarters of the East Jersey Board of Proprietors. Between 1683 and 1688 it was the port of entry for Scottish non-conformists, both Quaker and Calvinist, many from the prisons such as Bass Rock prison outside Edinburgh, sponsored by Scottish proprietors jointly, serving as indentured servants.

The last Scottish expedition of colonization by promoter Sir George Scot arrived in Perth Amboy in December 1685 on the ship the "Henry and Francis." Sir George and his wife Lady Margaret died in the voyage but their daughter, Euphemia married fellow passenger and Proprietor Dr. John Johnstone. Johnstone rose to become one of the most prominent men in the colony before his death in 1732.



**James Drummond, the Earl of Perth, Scotland,**

The grateful Scots who had immigrated to Ambo Point called their capital New Perth in honor of one of the Twelve Proprietors, James Drummond, the Earl of Perth, Scotland; older residents gave ground in the compromise name of Perth Amboy.

In 1688 James II abdicated in the English "Glorious" Revolution. Lord Perth fled to France and organized Scottish emigration ceased with Governor Robert Barclay's death in 1690. The Proprietors turned to promoting the East Jersey settlement among the Dutch farming areas of Brooklyn and Manhattan. "The Lowlands above the Raritan are the handsomest, pleasantest country a man can behold." So spoke Cornelius Van Tienhoven, Secretary of New Netherlands in 1650. So thought many Dutch families who later migrated there.

Gerardus Beekman, whose family was among the first to settle Manhattan then known as part of Nova Belgique, was among the first to buy vast lands in present day Franklin Township, Somerset County and lead a second phase of colonization in the upper Raritan Valley. Although the Scottish Proprietors plans for colonization lasted only a few short years, the initial settlement continued to attract new Scottish immigrants establishing the East Jersey Midlands as focal points of Scottish influence within the Middle Colonies.

Questions raised in the 17<sup>th</sup> century about the legality of the Proprietors' right to govern were resolved on April 15, 1702 when Dr. John Johnstone, as a member of the East Jersey Board of Proprietors, signed the document ceding the Proprietors pretended powers back to the Crown and Queen Anne. However, the Proprietors retained their rights to the land and continued to be prominent in New Jersey government, receiving appointments from the Crown. And the two Jerseys (West and East) were now united to form a single Royal Province under one Royal Governor.

The East Jersey Proprietors lost little time in exploiting their holdings. By 1702 they had voted themselves handsome dividends amounting to a total of 17,500 acres apiece. East Jersey thus acquired large landholders along the Raritan and Millstone Rivers and in Monmouth County, and elsewhere, estates of a thousand or more acres were common.

After the War for Independence, the State of New Jersey adopted a policy of recognizing land titles from any longtime occupant of the land. The vast tracts of land still existing in Bedminster Township are a legacy of the large landowning Proprietors to this day.

The Jacobus Vanderveer House is located on Route 202/206. The main artery connecting

Somerville and Morristown is Route 202. First travel here followed Indian footpaths later widened through use to accommodate wagons. After 1700 the Scottish and English Proprietors helped improve important routes that even with the Proprietors' support for well over a century remained mostly dirt surfaces. Situated on 218 acres that make up River Road Park, this historic site is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. It is a veritable Rosetta Stone as the headquarters for General Henry Knox, the history of the Pluckemin Encampment, Military Academy and the Vanderveer family – all-important components of New Jersey's pivotal role in the American Revolutionary War. Sometime in 1743 Jacobus Vanderveer, the elder, whose grandfather had come to New York from North Holland in 1659, became the first Vanderveer to settle in Bedminster. The Jacobus Vanderveer House is the last surviving building associated with the Vanderveer family in Bedminster.

Aside from their civic and religious contributions, the Vanderveer family members were staunch supporters of the American struggle for independence. Elias Vanderveer, "an active and spirited Whig," was taken prisoner during the British cavalry raid on Pluckemin in 1776. He was held captive under brutal conditions in a prison ship anchored in New York harbor. After his release in 1778, he returned home and died in his thirty-third year on November 29, 1778. His brother was Dr. Henry Vanderveer, a portion of whose house was moved to East Jersey Olde Towne in Piscataway.

Lawrence Vanderveer, whose house is in Hillsborough, served as a surgeon during the war and was also taken prisoner by the British. Jacobus Vanderveer, the younger, is known to have helped supply the American army.



**General Henry Knox**

The National and State registered Historic District of Pluckemin, situated in the Township of Bedminster, was founded by Jacob Eoff, an early tavern keeper from Holland, who purchased some 500 acres of land from the estate of Dr. John Johnstone of Perth Amboy in 1741. The original Royal Charter creating Bedminster Township on April 4, 1749, is only one of two extant New Jersey township charters issued during the reign of King George II and is owned by the Forbes Family, who resides there. A well traveled crossroads, the village became an important center during the Colonial and Revolutionary War periods.

According to local tradition General Henry Knox and his wife Lucy lived in the Jacobus Vanderveer House from December 11, 1778 to June 3, 1779, while the General commanded the Continental Artillery encamped nearby at Artillery Park (now a suburban housing complex called The Hills). During the Second Middlebrook Encampment, the Knoxs' daughter, born here, was buried in the nearby Dutch Reformed Church cemetery.

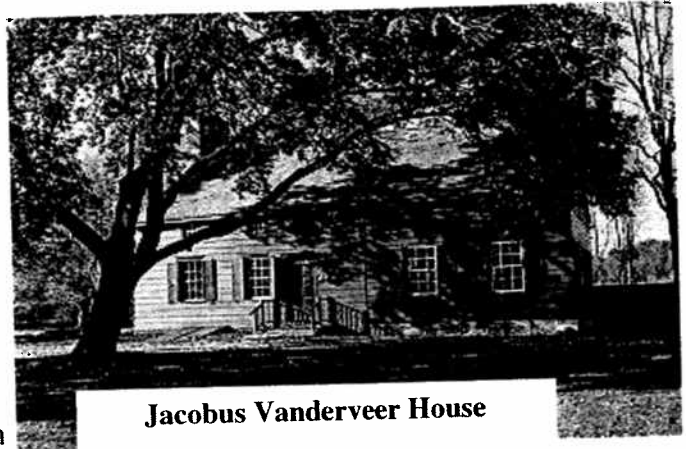
To minimize the impact of about 10,000 men of the Continental Army, equal to the entire population of Somerset County, brigades were assigned to locations several miles apart. The Artillery Camp of about 1,000 troops was located on the south side of the Second Watchung Mountain, secure from British attack, and near the Jacobus Vanderveer House. The Artillery Camp that General Knox established, the first military academy in the country for the training of artillery and engineer officers, became the forerunner to the Academy at West Point. Here Knox directed his troops in military strategy and tactics and in the use of heavy artillery.

General Henry Knox served with distinction in every major engagement of the war from the Boston Massacre to the surrender at Yorktown, and later became George Washington's Secretary of War. Knox, who was from Massachusetts, during the siege of Boston transported with his men more than sixty tons of weaponry – shells and about fifty heavy guns – down from Fort Ticonderoga in the dead of winter. The heavy artillery helped persuade the British to abandon the siege. He is also remembered as the first Commander of West Point and as the namesake for Fort Knox.

Profane, outspoken, and fond of good living, Knox was a former bookseller turned artilleryman. Noticeable in any gathering by virtue of his nearly three hundred pounds, he often hid the fact that he had blown off two fingers in a hunting accident by constantly wrapping his mutilated hand in a handkerchief. He survived the dangers of the battlefield only to die a strange death at a young age – when he was fifty-six a chicken bone perforated his intestines.

The Artillery Camp was an impressive site. In addition to barracks for the enlisted men and separate quarters for the officers, the camp included an armorer's shop, a complete military forge, and a laboratory. The center of the camp was an E-shaped building.

On February 18, 1779 Knox hosted a ball in a hundred-foot-long pavilion at the Artillery Camp that was built for the occasion, which included fireworks. The event honored the first anniversary of the alliance with the King of France and the American colonies. It was attended by more than 300 people, including Generals George Washington, Nathanael Greene, and a "circle of brilliants," led by Martha Washington.



Jacobus Vanderveer House

The West Georgian wing of the Jacobus Vanderveer House, which is the oldest part built between 1772 and 1778, is typical of the Dutch style frame houses that once dotted the Somerset County countryside before the Revolution. Important is a wall in the southwest parlor that features raised wood paneling above the fireplace with a barrel-back cabinet to the side. The spacious east Federal addition, circa 1813, contains higher ceilings and a period New Jersey mantelpiece of the same era. It was during this time that the house reached its architectural apex.

The legacy of the Jacobus Vanderveer House provides an important link between Revolutionary War sites in Morristown and Somerville, chronicling the history of Washington's winter encampments and their sacrifice so that we can live in a free country. It continues to be, as it has for over two centuries, at the center of Bedminster Township's rich history.

**The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance, Inc. is a group of individuals, organizations and sites, historical, educational, cultural and eventful, in the greater river system region of these two rivers in Central New Jersey. We seek to promote preservation and understanding of the rich heritage of this region as described in our *Guide to Historic Sites in Central New Jersey*, and on our website [www.raritanmillstone.org](http://www.raritanmillstone.org), that have continually contributed to the strength of the United States. Through a variety of programs including the Sunday Series Programs held four times a year, key member sites are featured with an informative program and often a tour of that site. The Alliance's newsletter, *THE LINK*, published quarterly, also features a story about the member site corresponding with that event.**

**SUNDAY SERIES LUNCHEON LECTURE**  
**MAY 6, 2007**

ARTIFACTS DISCOVERED AT ARTILLERY SITE  
THEME OF LUNCHEON AND  
LECTURE-SLIDE SHOW, SUNDAY, MAY 6  
AT THE BERNARDS INN, ROUTE 202,  
BERNARDSVILLE

The training of Continental soldiers at the Pluckemin cantonment during 1778 and 1779 on artillery captured from the British changed the course of the American Revolution. The encampment site, known locally as Artillery Park, is being considered for the National Register of Historical Places.

A luncheon at 1 p.m. will precede the lecture. Principal speaker is Clifford Sekel Jr. of Somerville, who was the chief historical researcher during an archaeological dig at the site nearly 30 years ago. The artifacts are to be displayed in a new museum on the grounds of the Jacobus Vanderveer House located at River Road Park, Bedminster Township. When it opens the museum will be a key location in the new Crossroads of the Revolution National Heritage Area being planned for New Jersey.

This program is being held in cooperation with The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House. The lecture audience will also hear from Jim Cline, new President of The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House, about the current restoration underway of this facility.

Seating is limited. Reservations are required and can be made by calling Mrs. Elyce Jennings at 732-463-0706 before April 30, 2007. The cost including the luncheon and lecture is \$40.00 per person. Checks are payable in advance made out to RMHA.

The Sunday Series programs are held four times a year and each time a different historical, cultural or educational venue is featured.

**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, Interim 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 RARITAN-MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE  
ELEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER  
April 19, 2007  
THE NASSAU INN  
Princeton, NJ**

Featured speaker, Mark A. Else, distinguished Executive Director of the Meadows Foundation, gave the keynote address

***“The First Americans – Recapturing Our Dutch Heritage”.***

Awards for meritorious service were presented to Peter A. Primavera, Immediate Past President, who earlier announced his retirement from the Alliance and to Marjorie V. Kler Freeman, Past President and co-founder of the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance, also retired.

Elected for a 1-year term to the Class of 2008 was Dr. Harvey Brudner and for a 3-year term to the Class of 2010 were George Dawson, Donald Peck, Marilyn Rautio and Ann Suydam.



PETER A. PRIMAVERA  
PRESIDENT 2004-2007

**UPCOMING 2007 MEETING DATES**

The Board of Directors meets the third Thursday of March,  
May, September, October and November

The Executive Committee meets the first Thursday of  
January, February, April and June

The Sunday Series Programs are held in February,  
May, September and November as announced.

**NEW EVENT:** A gala Fund Raiser will be held the second Sunday  
of December. **SAVE THE DATE – DECEMBER 9, 2007**