



# The Link

*joining the sites along the rivers*

Volume 10 , Issue 4

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Spring 2009

## SUNDAY SERIES LUNCHEON/LECTURE

James T. Raleigh, President of the Friends of the Monmouth Battlefield Association, will explore "**GEORGE WASHINGTON and the LONGEST DAY of the AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR**"

Sunday, May 17, 2009 from 1:30-3:00 PM  
at historic Cranbury Inn,  
21 South Main Street, Cranbury, NJ.

Reservations are required. The inclusive luncheon/lecture cost is \$30.00 per person. To reserve call Elyce Jennings before May 10 at 732-463-0767 and mail your check payable to RMHA % Mrs. Elyce M. Jennings, 85 River Road Piscataway, NJ 08854.



## The Battle Of Monmouth *by Donald Johnstone Peck*

Come with me for a drive on historic roads through portions of Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon, and Monmouth counties and along roads traversing the Raritan and Millstone River valleys and their tributaries.

One of my favorite roads is old Route 514. When in 1655 Governor Petrus Stuyvesant made all of future New Jersey part of Nieuw Netherland, the Dutch laid out this first road through New Jersey. Roughly paralleling one of the major Lenni Lenape Indian trails, it began at Nieuw Amsterdam. From there it crossed the bay by ferry to a point near Elizabeth, and traversed the areas that would become Main Street in Woodbridge and Woodbridge Avenue in Piscata-

way (present day Edison) to the ford at the Raritan River that became Inian's Ferry in 1681.

Later in 1724, Inian's Ferry was named New Brunswick 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. From there present day Route 514 becomes Amwell Road in Franklin Township, (a name it has proudly borne for more than 200 years in honor of the last Royal Governor of New Jersey.)

Driving along Amwell Road from New Brunswick to East Millstone, we pass by the old Franklin Inn, circa 1752, the home of Cornelius and Anje Van



Liew, and where General Lord Charles Cornwallis is said to have stayed during the Second Middlebush Encampment, 1778-79.

The adjacent Six Mile Run Historic District on South Middlebush Road, Franklin Township encompasses exceptionally well-preserved vistas of a Dutch-settled rural nineteenth century landscape that once characterized the Raritan Valley. Contributing structures include numerous farm-

**THIRTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING**  
Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance, Inc.

(Alliance Sites are encouraged to send their  
Representative)

**APRIL 16, 2009**  
1:30-3:00 PM

**RARITAN YACHT CLUB**  
160 Water Street  
Perth Amboy, New Jersey

**LUNCHEON**  
(Choice of five entrees, salad and dessert)

\$30.00 per person

**ELECTION of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER**  
Cathleen R. Litvack,

Executive Director

**CROSSROADS of the**  
**AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

**2009 LEADERSHIP IN HISTORY AWARD**  
Presented to  
Congressman Rush D. Holt

To reserve please mail your check in advance  
before April 9, payable to RMHA and mail it to  
Mrs. Elyce M. Jennings, 851 River Road,  
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**The Raritan  
Yacht Club**

Established in 1865,  
RYC is one of the oldest  
yacht clubs in  
America. The present  
house, grounds and dock were purchased  
in 1916 from the Cooper Estate. The club  
has had many champions in national sailing  
events and several champions in the inter-  
national field. In 2006 the sailing vessel  
"Sinn Fein," owned and captained by RYC  
member Pete Rebovich, Sr. won the 100<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary Newport-Bermuda Race. An-  
chorage extends from the restored Perth  
Amboy-Tottenville, SI Ferry Slip Museum at  
the front of Smith Street to the South Am-  
boy railroad bridge. It is dotted with over  
250 yachts.

**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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publication schedule. News of major upcoming events for  
possible placement in the newsletter may be mailed, emailed  
or faxed to the following address. Any questions, please con-  
tact: Donald J. Peck, Editor, The Clausen Company, P.O.Box  
140, Fords, NJ 088 63 or phone 732-738-1165, fax 732-738-  
1618, or E-mail clausenco@aol.com.

steads, Dutch and English barns, smoke houses, corncribs, granaries and many other outbuildings.

Crossing the Delaware & Raritan Canal, completed in 1834, we see one of America's greatest inland waterways. Dug in the valleys of the three rivers it connects – the Raritan, the Millstone, and the Delaware, it was an engineering marvel running south through central New Jersey to New Brunswick where it empties into the Raritan River. During its peak years of 1866-1871, it carried more freight than any other canal in America. Closed in 1933, it became a state park in 1974.

Crossing the 44-mile long Delaware and Raritan Canal and the 38-mile long Millstone River, we continue west to where Amwell Road terminates at Ringoes. We then follow Route 179 south to Lambertville (Old Coryell's Ferry). It was from here that Commander-in-Chief General George Washington and his troops entered New Jersey on June 20, 1778, after having left their encampment at Valley Forge in Pennsylvania. Driving east from Lambertville on Route 518, we then follow the same route Washington and his Continental Army took for their rendezvous with the British Army at Monmouth Court House (present day Freehold, New Jersey).

Our first stop is at Hopewell Boro, where on June 23, 1778, the Continental Army camped on the farm

of John Hart, one of New Jersey's five signers of the Declaration of Independence. At nearby Hunt House, erected in 1752 of stone and timber, the farmstead of the Joseph Stouts (descendants of Penelope Van Princis Stout who was shipwrecked on Sandy Hook, New Jersey in 1620), in the shadow of the red shale Sourland Mountain, Washington held his celebrated council of war. It proposed the action that resulted in the Battle of Monmouth, with the greatest single assemblage of American officers.

At Hopewell Washington ordered an advance guard of four thousand men under Major General Marie-Joseph Lafayette to proceed eight miles to the east of Kingston, in present day Monroe Township, to place these troops directly across Sir Henry Clinton's route to New Brunswick and Perth Amboy should Clinton proceed in a northerly direction.



Major General Charles Lee, second in command, "who preferred to let the British force parade unmolested across the State," looked that day

"anxious and indignant that his military experience and judgment" had not persuaded his associates Washington, Greene, Hamilton, Stirling, Lafayette, Steuben, Knox, Poor, Wayne, Woodford, Patterson, Scott, Scammel, and Duportail.

That anxious look is well graven in one of the bas-reliefs of the Battle of Monmouth Monument at Freehold that depicts the outstanding leaders of the Revolution around the council of war table at Hopewell during a solar eclipse, June 24, 1778. General Washington is listening attentively while Lafayette urges immediate action, with Steuben and Duportail in agreement. Patterson and Greene would force an engagement too. Colonel Scammel, Adjutant-General, who was to die at Yorktown, is shown busily engaged recording the opinions of the experts and hoping that General Wayne, who wants to say something equally forceful, will wait until Lafayette is finished. Only Lee is sitting back, scoffing, and grumbling under his breath. And so it was here that the decision was made not to mount a serious attack on the twelve-mile-long British baggage train, but to attack only the rear guard and grab a part of it.

General Sir William Howe's forces had invaded the "rebel capital" of Philadelphia on September 26, 1777, via the Chesapeake Bay, after successfully engaging the

Americans at Brandywine, Delaware on September 11, 1777 and later on October 4, 1777 at Cliveden, the Benjamin Chew mansion at Germantown, Pennsylvania. British General John Burgoyne, without General Howe's troops, had proceeded from Canada but was defeated by American General Gates at Saratoga, October 17, 1777. Because of Gates's victory and the urging of the celebrated Benjamin Franklin, America's most distinguished citizen in Europe, France was at last willing to consider an alliance with America and signed treaties in February 1778, entering the war and making the Patriot cause seem more hopeful.

While General Howe and his regiments led a life of comfort in Philadelphia (winter of 1777-78), Washington at Valley Forge would write of his ragged army, "we had in camp not less than 2898 men unfit for duty by reason of their being barefoot and other-wise naked." The camp was in the middle of a rich and fertile county, but the farmers chose to trade their produce to the British rather than to the Continentals for worthless money. At Valley Forge, Prussian volunteer, Baron von Steuben, would teach the new army how to march and maneuver, as an army should.

The French recognition of the revolutionary regime in February 1778 with Spain and Holland soon following France's exam-

ple, threatened the British naval supply route to Philadelphia. In the spring of 1778, Sir Henry Clinton, who was ordered to take the British army back to New York, had replaced Sir William Howe. Under the threat of a possible French blockade of the Delaware Bay, Clinton chose to march his 20,000 British troops across New Jersey to New York.



**Sir Henry Clinton**

Crossing the Delaware River at Cooper's Ferry (now Camden), the twelve-mile-long baggage train of the Royal Army traveled by way of Gloucester, Haddonfield and Mount Holly (not far from Rancocas and "Strawberry Hill," (the former 600-acre West Jersey plantation of Royal Governor William Franklin).



*Strawberry Hill, near Rancocas, once the home of the last Royal Governor of New Jersey, William Franklin*

Mount Holly is where Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence, later King William IV of Great Britain, had been stationed with British troops. They then continued on to Crosswicks, Allentown, Clarksburg, and eventually Freehold.

By now, Washington's forces had been reinforced by new enlistments of patriots who had been heartened by the successes of Trenton, Princeton, and above all, with the consequent French entry into the war, Saratoga. The American army numbered about 14,500, including about 1000 militia. The British army numbered about 21,000, including 4100 Hessians, 2100 Loyalists and 1000 women and children.

As we follow in Washington's footsteps, we continue east on Route 518, crossing Province Line Road, which separates Hunterdon and Somerset counties. This line is the original division line between East and West Jersey. The Rev. George Keith of Perth Amboy, Surveyor General of East Jersey, laid it out in 1687. Continuing on present Route 518, we are following Washington's route through Rocky Hill to Kingston and then on to Cranbury.

Benjamin Franklin, as a boy of 17, had taken the ferry from Perth Amboy to South Amboy and walked across New Jersey to Burlington enroute to Philadelphia on what was known as Federal Road.

It passed through Monroe Township and Cranbury; an important stagecoach stop was at the Cranbury Inn.

It was on June 26, 1778, that Washington arrived at Cranbury unable to advance the army any further because of heat and rain. While the soldiers camped in the Cranbury area, Washington made his headquarters at the home of Dr. Hezekiah Stites on South Main Street. Here he met with Lafayette, Hamilton, and others.

Our visit to Cranbury includes a brief stop at the churchyard behind the Presbyterian Church. Repositories of history, graveyards also contain memorable epitaphs. Early poets seem to have had a field day preparing rhymes, embellishing memorials to agree or disagree with the grimaces of skulls or the pouting of periwigged angels above them. Perhaps the most dismal of the lot is that chosen for Humphrey Mount, an elder of the Presbyterian congregation, buried under a stone brought from Woodbridge:

“From this cold bed of  
humid clay  
Reader to you I cry:  
Your time is short, make  
no delay,  
Prepare, prepare to die.”

Departing Cranbury we then follow the narrow road George Washington and the Continentals took on June 27 as they crossed the ten miles of

rolling farmland, wood and marshes to the high ground of Gravel Hill just west of the Manalapan Brook and Matchaponix River in Monroe Township. Due to the excessive 100 degree heat, heavy thunder and humidity that day many Americans died of heat prostration and were buried along the road through Monroe Township or where they camped at Gravel Hill on the evening before the Battle of Monmouth. Included among the survivors was James Monroe, the fifth President of the United States. George Washington made his headquarters at the house of John Anderson near Gravel Hill.

On June 26 the British forces camped west of Monmouth Court House on the Allentown Road with heavy rain and thunder all night. The next day General Clinton learned that enemy forces were operating around his preferred route via New Brunswick to New York City and so he elected to go the Sandy Hook route.

Sunday, June 28, 1778, was a brutally hot and humid day, with temperatures again soaring to nearly one hundred degrees. In a fifteen-mile span the Battle of Monmouth occurred in the soft hills, meadows, hedgerows, and marshy ravines drained by the Spotwood North, Middle and South Brooks (lesser tributaries of the Raritan River system), between Old Tenant Church and the broader area surrounding

Monmouth Court House (Freehold), with men and horses dying from sheer exhaustion.



Arriving at the Monmouth Battlefield State Park, in Manalapan, an 1813-acre park that commemorates this battle, we step on the sacred soil of the first major land offensive during the American Revolution in terms of the number of troops. It was also the largest land offensive of the American forces, the largest land artillery battle of the Revolution and the longest one-day battle of the war.

The Battle of Monmouth, the hardest fought engagement of the American Revolution, was a “pell-mell” battle, fought by regiments and detachments rather than brigades and divisions. Even today, it is difficult to be certain of the exact sequence and timing of events.

Further confusion was added by Major General Charles Lee who, recently released in a prisoner exchange from his incarceration (December 1776-May 1778) with American victory unlikely, favored a negotiated peace. Lee, overcome by Clinton’s superior forces, was forced to retreat, causing Washington to

conclude Lee had not obeyed his orders to attack. Washington met the retreating troops and assumed command desperately seeking to reorganize them.

Long hours of struggle ensued all day until Clinton ordered a withdrawal that evening. Washington, together with his energy-sapped units, slept with their firearms on the ground they occupied, awaiting the next day. However, as soon as it was dark, Clinton's army rapidly departed, leaving Washington to conclude



that pursuit was pointless.

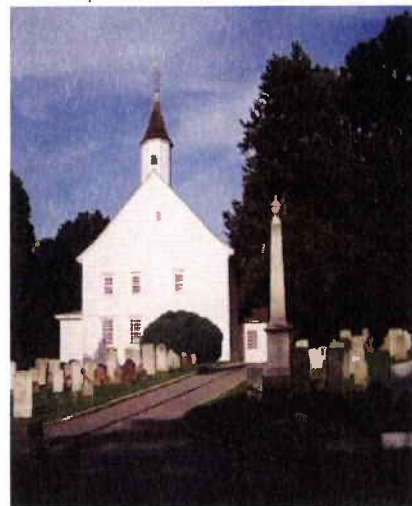
### **Village Inn Englishtown**

On June 29 Washington and his troops returned to Englishtown. Here, at the Village Inn, orders were framed for the court martial General Charles Lee asked for "to clear his good name." It lasted six weeks, the court moving with the army. General Lee was charged with disobedience of orders, misbehavior before the army, and disrespect towards the Commander-in-Chief. Lafayette, von Steuben and Wayne were among the 26 witnesses who testified against him; Knox headed the smaller number that appeared in his

defense.

Hundreds of men fell victim to the brutal sun, helping to create an American legend named Molly Pitcher. Mary Hays, known as Molly, followed her husband into battle carrying pitchers of water from Perrine's spring to thirsty soldiers. Tradition says that when her husband was wounded, Molly stepped up to replace him at his cannon.

Old Tennant Church, erected in 1751, three miles southeast of Englishtown and three miles west of Freehold, was founded by Scottish political and religious refugees and repeatedly appears in surveys of American architecture. Its ministers were ardent supporters of the Revolution and it is a shrine to freedom. It replaced the much earlier Old Scots Meeting House, in Topenamus, Marlboro Township, built in 1692, at the site where its pastor, the first Presbyterian minister in America, John Boyd, was ordained May 29, 1706. He died two years later on August 30, 1708, and the oldest



grave there is his.

### **Old Tennant Church**

Samuel Craig, who built Craig House in 1746 (a scene of heavy fighting and located on Monmouth Battlefield), is buried at Old Scots churchyard along with other early Scottish settlers. In 1778 John Craig, paymaster of the American Army, owned this house. John Craig's family fled, casting the family silver into the adjacent well for hiding. The restored house has huge fireplaces, hand hewn ceiling beams, a paneled hall and stairway reminiscent of Old Tennent Church. The house was used as a field hospital by both sides.

The tombstones in Old Tennent's graveyard on White Oak Hill and in the fields in sight of the church are those not only of refugees from political persecution in Scotland, but those of patriot blue-clad Continentals and British Redcoats of the King who lie side by side as well.

The Battle of Monmouth was a political and psychological triumph for the Continental Army and for Washington. It marked a turning point in the war. Washington proved himself as a field marshal. The American forces, which had profited from the drill and discipline training they had received under General von Steuben's tutelage at Valley Forge, fighting in line positions and fighting toe to toe, proved themselves capable of holding their own against veteran Brit-

ish troops in open field battle.

As it was, a lot of men were unnecessarily lost. Clinton's march was not delayed nor was any part of the baggage train taken. Late that same evening, Clinton resumed his march down Dutch Lane Road through Colts Neck, Holmdel, Middletown, and across the Navesink Hills to Sandy Hook.

Enroute a number of small skirmishes were fought with the retreating baggage train and soldiers. The marked grave of Michael Field, a private in the First Reg. N.J. Militia, from Somerset County, is no different from thousands of other soldiers who died in the Revolution and who are buried in unmarked graves. He is buried on the spot where he died, June 28, 1778, during one of these skirmishes. His grave is still preserved on Heyers Mill Road in Colts Neck. In percentage of lives lost the American Revolution was the second most costly war in American history.

The final leg of our drive takes us north by way of Englishtown to Spotswood, named after Spotteswoode, the ancestral estate in Ochiltree, Scotland of Proprietors of East Jersey, Doctor John Johnstone of Perth Amboy and his brother James. Their land holdings in this area numbered some 15,000 acres. At Spotswood the Americans camped on July 1, 1778, before leaving the next

day for New Brunswick.

New Brunswick citizens cheered hoarsely when Washington marched into town. Washington offered his weary troops a time of rest and relaxation encamped along present-day George Street and in the open fields of Raritan Landing near the site of present-day Johnson



Park, on River Road, Piscataway until July 7, 1778.

### Metlar-Bodine House

Washington and his staff



stayed at Ross Hall, a commodious and elegant residence of the widow Sara Ross, the wife of a medical doctor who had

died three years previously. It was situated on a 350-acre farm estate in Piscataway, not far from Metlar's Lane and the Metlar-Bodine House (circa 1728 and one of two lone survivors of the earlier village of Raritan Landing).

On July 3, 1778, Washington, from Ross Hall, ordered his 12,000 troops to line the New Brunswick waterfront on the following afternoon for the highlight of their bivouac, a wave-like firing of their muskets in salute to the second anniversary of our national independence. Celebrated with a grand review, this was the first official observance of the Fourth of July. Soldiers and citizens alike would not soon forget that glorious day first celebrated here in New Jersey.

On the evening of July Fourth, after the military exercise, Washington invited his officers, including the Marquis de Lafayette, Alexander Hamilton, James McHenry, Baron von Steuben, and Nathaniel Greene, and their ladies back to headquarters - Ross Hall - for a ball to mark the national independence holiday.

By July 5, British transports had evacuated Clinton's forces from Sandy Hook back to New York City. In the meantime, all Britain (including King George III) could do was to strategize how they might successfully end the war and keep their proverbial British stiff upper lip.

