



The Link

joining the sites along the rivers

Volume 10, Issue 3

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Winter 2009

THE NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION AWARD

On November 22, 2008, at the 25th Annual New Jersey History Conference in Trenton, Carol C. Natarelli and Marilyn Rautio, Co-Presidents, on behalf of The Alliance, received a New Jersey Historical Commission award for the work the Alliance performed in publishing the **GUIDE TO HISTORIC SITES IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY**, the quarterly issues of the newsletter, *The Link*, the Sunday Series Luncheon/Lecture Programs, and the website www.raritanmillstone.org with its links to sites and the larger New Jersey history community.

SUNDAY SERIES LUNCHEON/LECTURE George Washington's 277th

Birthday Party

Charlie Brown's Steakhouse

4591 Route 27, Kingston, NJ

February 15, 2009 1:00-3:00 PM

"The Confederation Period 1783-1788"

Distinguished speaker, David Fowler, Ph.D., Past Director of the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington's Crossing, PA. The inclusive price per guest is \$30.00. **Reservations are required.** To reserve telephone Elyce M. Jennings @ 732-463-0767 to select your entrée. Mail your check payable to the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance, Inc., before February 8, to Mrs. Elyce M. Jennings, 851 River Road, Piscataway, NJ 08867.

ROCKINGHAM

ROCKY HILL, NEW JERSEY

***"The cunning and cruelty of politics are sometimes balanced
By such simplicities as playing the violin"***

By Donald Johnstone Peck

The history of Rockingham began when John Harrison had a small two-story farmhouse built between 1702 and 1710 with one room on each floor. The house was expanded in 1760 and a two-story porch was added by Judge John Berrien, a prosperous farmer appointed Judge of Somerset County in 1739 and Justice of the Supreme Court in 1764. Berrien's grandfather was Jansen Berrien. A Huguenot and native of Berrien in the French Department of Finisterre, Jansen Berrien was a fugitive to Holland and America who turned up in Flatbush, Long Island in 1669.

In the spring of 1783, the Continental Congress, struggling with problems of war debts, was driven from Philadelphia by the threats of soldiers mutinous for their back pay, rations and insufficient clothing. On June 26, 1783 the Continental Congress made Princeton the de facto capital of the new nation until it adjourned in early November.

As peace negotiations dragged on into 1783, the army, quartered at Newburgh on the Hudson River, had grown restive. With Princeton full of marauders, spies, and officials hanging about, Congress summoned Washington from his Newburgh headquarters on August 12, to stay in the large house on the late Judge John Berrien's handsome farm. As there was no residence in Princeton large enough to accommodate Washington, his wife Martha, and his staff, Washington made Rockingham his last wartime headquarters from August 23 to November 10, 1783. Furnished in period pieces

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**UPCOMING SCHEDULED MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Alliance Sites are encouraged to send their

Representative

March 19, 2009 FROM 1:30-3:00 PM

New Brunswick Free Public library

(Carl T. Valenti Room)

60 Livingston Avenue

(Corner of Morris & Livingston Avenues)

New Brunswick, NJ 08901

SPEAKER:

George Dawson,

RMHA Director &

New Brunswick City Historian

Topic:

“The New Brunswick Nielson Family”

The Library building dates to 1903, and was built largely through the support of a grant by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

REMEMBERING TRENTON

Central New Jersey's significant role in winning the American Revolutionary War continues to inspire leaders of our day. In his inaugural address, President Barack Obama reminded the nation... "In the year of America's birth (1776), in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shore of an icy river (Delaware). The capital (Philadelphia) was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At the moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation (George Washington) ordered these words to be read to the people:

“Let it be told to the future world... that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive... that the city (Trenton) and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet it.” (the Battle of Trenton, December 26, 1776)



Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

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*An organization of individuals,
organizations and sites
working to promote preservation and understand-
ing 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
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 following address. Any questions, please contact: 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.

and replica military objects, Rockingham interprets a family residence shifted into personal use by the Commander-in-Chief.

Margaret Berrien, the widow of Judge Berrien, had been trying to sell Rockingham. She was pleased beyond measure to have such distinguished company and a lease paid for by the Congress. The Widow Berrien knew, as did the Congress, that Washington's campaigns in the Jersey Midlands had been crucial to the development of his national reputation.

During this time Congress met in the Library Room of Nassau Hall in Princeton. Sessions were presided over by Elias Boudinot, one of New Jersey's most distinguished statesmen. Boudinot later served in the Federal Congress and as a director of the United States Mint. The highlight of this session was the ten-week visit of General Washington, who consulted with Congress on the final arrangements for the demobilization of the army.

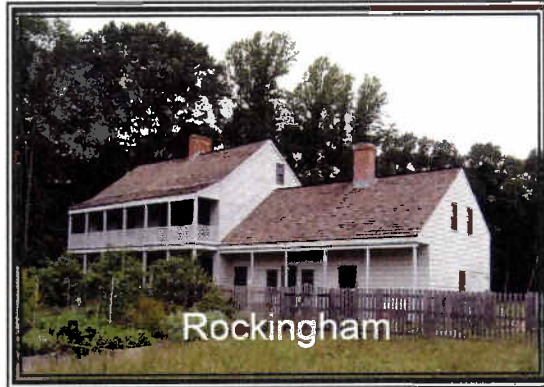
It was at Rockingham that Washington entertained members of Congress at dinner relaxed, and even in a witty mood. The Washingtons were visited by Elias Boudinot and returned visits frequently at Morven in Princeton where Boudinot was staying with his sister, Annis Stockton, the widow of Richard Stockton. Other Rockingham visitors included Thomas Paine, who had written a presumed letter, saying the country wasn't as mindful of his services as it should be; John Paul Jones, Scottish expatriate and founder of the United States Navy; and Thomas Jefferson, who may have demonstrated that the cunning and cruelty of politics are sometimes balanced by such simplicities as playing the violin.

It was also here that George Washington sat for portrait painter and father of the American drama William Dunlap of Perth Amboy. During this portrait sitting, the pleasant circumstances of Rockingham may have been in marked contrast to all that was in Washington's mind.

On June 16, 1775 the Second Continental Congress unanimously elected Washington as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army and of

the forces "raised or to be raised, for the defense of American liberty". John Adams, who had nominated Washington for the post of supreme commander, remembered Washington accepting the nomination at the State House in Philadelphia.

John Adams had suggested to the Congress that Washington was "a gentleman whose skill as an officer, whose



independent fortune, great talents and universal character would command the respect of America and unite the full exertions of the Colonies better than any other person alive." His cousin Samuel Adams seconded the motion.

Adams had never been a soldier, but Washington had already been one. Washington would recall his military service as William Dunlap carefully brushed on canvas his famous masterpiece. He would recall November 6, 1752 when he was appointed a major in the Virginia militia at the age of twenty. He had served with the militia during the French and Indian War at the Battle of Fort Necessity, July 3, 1754. He survived four bullets through his coat and two horses shot out from beneath him. On August 14, 1755 he had been appointed Colonel and Commander of the Virginia Regiment.

Virginia was one of the most radical of the colonies and Fairfax County, where Washington lived, was among the most radical counties in Virginia. Washington was elected on August 1, 1774 to the First Continental Congress, and in the fall Fairfax County organized a militia of its own with Washington elected as its Commander.

At the Second Continental Congress in 1775, Washington headed four committees on military matters and supplies. He had cut an impressive figure,

a combination of noblesse oblige and modesty, and he had offered to serve without pay, asking only that Congress cover his expenses. His sixteen years in the House of Burgesses, plus his experience in the Continental Congress, had educated him in the political process. He respected the authority of the Congress.

And so it was with the utmost seriousness that Washington accepted the nomination as Commander-in-Chief, remarking, "I am truly sensible of the high Honour done me. I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess for the support of the glorious cause... But I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room, that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the Command I am honored with." (Even those who had their doubts knew Washington had meant every word of it. He was now 43 years old. On March 18, 1776 Washington would lead the Continental Army into victory in Boston. And on April 3, 1776 Harvard would award him the first of five Honorary Degrees.)

During his sitting for his portrait painted by Charles Willson Peale, Washington allowed his mind to drift down the Millstone River as he led his troops from the Battles of Trenton and Princeton along the river roads and back to Morristown and the winter of 1777. Smallpox had dropped hundreds of the valiant in the January snow. And then there was the bitter winter of 1779-1780 when he occupied the mansion formerly owned by Jacob Ford, Jr. (now the first national historic park in the country). He could recall how New Jersey had sheltered his army through four years and three winters and how it had been ravaged as no other state had been.

From Morristown's strategic location the large British force in New York City could be watched from a place where the American army could be preserved through the difficult winter months. The winter of 1780 was the most severe since 1755. When the army had arrived at Jockey Hollow the snow was already two feet deep. During the winter more than 20 successive snowstorms had blasted the hills and slopes with six- or seven-foot snowdrifts. So intense, so prolonged was the cold that streams froze and local mills could not grind grain for the starving troops.

Ill-clad soldiers, with the barest of protection from the cold, hands and feet frozen, experienced more cruel privations by far than did those who served at Valley Forge.

Washington could recall the sudden raid from Staten Island by a large force under General Wilhelm von Knyphausen on June 7, 1780 at Connecticut Farms and the subsequent Battle of Springfield on June 23, 1780. Here General Greene had led 2,500 Continental Regulars, later aided by 5,000 New Jersey militia rallied by General Philomen Dickinson, to oppose Knyphausen's 6,000 British and Hessian soldiers. The Reverend James Caldwell, whose wife had been murdered sixteen days earlier, had passed out Watts' hymnals for use as wadding in American cannons. His shout "Give them Watts, boys!" still echoes through the years.

With a seriousness that Peale had captured in his portrait, Washington recalled that the success of Sir Henry Clinton in the Southern States at Savannah, Charleston, King's Mountain, Cowpens, and elsewhere, had been dimmed by increasingly bad news. Clinton had left Cornwallis in charge of the Southern area, and had retired to New York City where he expected Washington would stage a major battle. Washington, in fact, had prepared misleading dispatches that he hoped would fall into Clinton's hands. That had taken place and Clinton had been completely fooled.

Washington then recalled one of his boldest gambles of all in August of 1781. Leaving behind only a few regiments to cover the British garrison in New York City, he and his French ally, the Comte de Rochambeau, led a force of 7,000 American and French soldiers, converging at Princeton as they headed southward to Yorktown, Virginia, to trap the British army of Lord Cornwallis on the Yorktown peninsula. Although relying on the British navy to rescue him via the Chesapeake Bay, the French had blocked its entrance. Then with the aid of the French fleet under Admiral de Grasse, the Americans had a chance for a surprise attack and victory at Yorktown.

Cornwallis surrendered his army of some 7,000 soldiers and 900 seamen on October 19, 1781, while the Redcoats marched out onto the field near

Yorktown for the ceremony of capitulation with their bands playing "The World Turned Upside Down".

The news didn't reach London until November 25, 1781. The war continued for some more months but by March 1782, with the resignation of Lord North, a new ministry in England was ready to yield to American demands. The provisional draft of a peace treaty was signed at Paris on November 30, 1782. However, it was not until September 3, 1783 that the final documents were signed freeing the thirteen states from the bonds of Great Britain.

Washington remembered the ceasefire he had issued on April 9, 1783 ending the war. Congress proclaimed war's end on April 15, 1783, six years plus two days after the surprise assault on the vastly outnumbered Americans at the Battle of Bound Brook. New Jersey church bells rang, calling congregations together in thanksgiving.

Soldiers marching across the Jersey Midlands from 1776 to 1781 had wasted fields, torched homes, churches and barns, and generally terrorized the citizenry. Weed-covered ru-



ins of buildings from the British occupation of 1776 were everywhere in evidence. But New Jersey colonists could at last be proud of their monumental accomplishment. Throughout the colony the common man had played his part in assuring this glorious victory. New Jersey patriots had contributed well to the war effort by maintaining morale, organizing a militia, and antagonizing British movements. They had fully demonstrated those qualities that were fundamental to securing the rights and privileges we now so highly cherish.

With the official ending of the war, conflicts coming from both its diversity and vastness were to be sources of both trouble and strength for the new United States of America.

The infant nation was already an empire. Its boundaries contained 889,000 square miles – Spain, Great Britain and France totaled only a little over 500,000 square miles. Washington knew that size alone could not equal nationhood; only settlement and cohesion could do that.

The last British troops finally left American soil on November 25, 1783. This victory marked the end of the last effort of an English king to rule as well as reign. On November 1, 1783 the news reached Princeton that the Treaty of Paris had been signed and that the war for independence had finally been won. The entire nation rejoiced that the United States had taken its rightful place among the nations of the world.

The very desk on which General Washington wrote his "Farewell Orders to the Army of the United States" may still be found in the second-floor study at Rockingham. In his "Farewell Orders" Washington bid his army "an affectionate, a long farewell." He recalled how a disciplined army had been formed and how men from every part of the Union had become "but one patriotic band of Brothers." It is thought that he read it to his Life Guard (which he formed on March 11, 1776) and to his assembled staff on November 2, 1783, from the balcony on what at first may seem to be the back of the house, but in reality is the front. On October 30, 1783 these orders were dispatched from Rockingham to General Henry Knox at Newburgh, N.Y. with instructions it was to be read to the troops there on November 2.

Five years later on November 1, 1788, an expiring Confederation Congress was to set in motion the mechanism by which future presidents would be elected. On April 6, 1789, George Washington was the unanimous choice of all sixty-nine electors and therefore the President-Elect with John Adams as Vice President. It was Washington alone who could pull together both the diversity and the vastness of the new nation. As a founder and father of his country, he had kept the military obedient to him and Congress. He had helped bring about a transformation of the American government from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution. His life still has the power to inspire anyone who studies it.

DID YOU KNOW that the first permanent printing business in New Jersey was established by James Parker in Woodbridge in 1754, according to Gordon Bond, author of a new book **JAMES PARKER - A PRINTER ON THE EVE OF REVOLUTION?** But the first printing in New Jersey was done in Perth Amboy in the year 1723 by William Bradford who had brought to Perth Amboy the necessary equipment and here, probably on the south side of Smith Street between High and Rector, for there at the time he owned property, did the first printing that was done in what is now the State of New Jersey. Under a contract with the provincial government he printed paper money and the proceedings of the Assembly. Harold E. Pickersgill recorded details of this in his book **NOVA CAESARIA AND OMPOGE POINT WHICH LATER BECAME NEW JERSEY AND PERTH AMBOY.**

DID YOU KNOW that Perth Amboy's Mayor, Wilda Diaz, has charged Kathleen Manning DePow, a Director of the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance, Inc. and 2008 chairperson for Perth Amboy's 325th Anniversary Committee with the responsibility of establishing the Museum of Perth Amboy (MOPA)? It is planned to open in 2009 and will be located in the restored Perth Amboy-Tottenville Ferry Slip ticket office at the foot of Smith Street. The Ferry Slip is one of nine historic sites in Perth Amboy listed in RMHA's **GUIDE TO HISTORIC SITES IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY.**



DID YOU KNOW that, according to his biographer, Willard Sterne Randall, in September 1762 William Franklin was ushered into the presence of King George III at St. James's Palace where he bent his right knee, took the King's hands into his own white-gloved hands and kissed them, and then rose to receive his commission and recite his oath of office as the last Royal Governor of New Jersey? Then on the icy, bitter-cold morning of February 25, 1763, the elegant young governor shrugged off his bearskin robe and mounted the steps of the old stone courthouse in Perth Amboy before a shivering crowd of loyal subjects. After relieving the old governor and hearing his new commission read aloud, William Franklin gave a mercifully short speech and led the way down High Street to the nearest tavern for a hearty dinner and a round of toasts. Today you can visit this historic site in front of Perth Amboy's City Hall (the oldest municipal building in continuous use in the United States) and near a giant English Elm tree (planted in early colonial days).



DID YOU KNOW that the Borough of Spotswood's name is derived from the name Spotteswoode, the ancestral home in Scotland of James Johnstone, a Proprietor of East Jersey, who on April 10, 1685 established his plantation there? George Washington sent two dispatches from Spotswood dated July 1, 1778. One of these was the order for the court martial of General Charles Lee.

DID YOU KNOW that the Middlesex County Cultural & Heritage Commission "Historic Gardens" could be accessed at www.cultureheritage.org? Some of these gardens include the Buccleuch Mansion and Gardens, Frank G. Helyar Woods, and The Rutgers Gardens, New Brunswick; East Jersey Olde Towne Village, Piscataway; The Kearny Cottage Museum Gardens, Perth Amboy and Harbor Walk at Raritan Bay, Perth Amboy, (waterfront gardens maintained by the City of Perth Amboy and the Perth Amboy Garden Club.)

DID YOU KNOW that the Metuchen Post Office on Main Street was placed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places through the efforts of Metuchen-Edison Historical Society member and Secretary of the League of New Jersey Historical Societies, Kevin Hale? The Metuchen-Edison Historical Society was founded in 1974 with the primary purpose of promoting an interest in and appreciation of the history of the Borough of Metuchen and of Edison Township.



DID YOU KNOW that the Wilson-Bachman House in historic Millstone is one of two in Somerset County and one of only four homes built by Frank Lloyd Wright in New Jersey? The other three Wright homes are in Bernardsville, Cherry Hill and Glen Ridge. Built on the banks of the Millstone River, the Wilson-Bachman House needed restoration following flooding by Hurricane Doria in 1971 and Hurricane Floyd in 1999.



DID YOU KNOW that the Millstone River's Indian name was Mattawang, which meant "hard to travel?" At one time it flowed south carrying the waters of the Hudson River across the Jersey Coastal Plains to the ocean. After the last great Ice Age, its normal course was reversed, emptying into the Raritan River a short distance below Finderne.

DID YOU KNOW Reenactors Professor Doug Eveleigh of Cook College and D & R Canal Watch board member, Ted Chase, and their team re-created on November 5, 2008 a moment in history on the Millstone River at Rocky Hill, NJ. While staying at Rockingham, his last military headquarters, on November 5, 1783, George Washington, together with Thomas Paine and others, stirred up Millstone River mud while Washington and Paine held lighted paper close to the surface igniting the methane gas that had bubbled up.



Photo courtesy of Robert Barth

DID YOU KNOW that the great Raritan River and its tributaries, named by the Raritans, a tribe of the Lenni Lenape Native Americans, drains over one thousand square miles of fertile valleys? The largest river system in New Jersey, its headwaters are in Budd Lake at an elevation of 940 feet. It flows some 85 miles through the Highlands, Piedmont and Inner Coastal Plain Provinces of north-central New Jersey until it empties into Raritan Bay at Perth Amboy. The name Raritan comes from the Native American Indian word Laetan meaning "forked river." The South Branch is joined by the North Branch at a place thought sacred to these people known as Tucca-Rama-Hacking or "the meeting place of the waters."

