



Volume 7, Issue 2

Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance

May, 2005

President's Message

-Annual Meeting-

Our annual meeting, held on April 21st at the Cranbury Inn, was a great success! Dr. Alex Magoun gave a terrific talk on Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. We welcome new Board of Directors members Carol Natarelli, who is active in the Piscataway Historical and Heritage Association and the Fellowship for the Metlar-Bodine House, and Bonita Grant, Librarian at Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University. With our dedicated Officers and Board of Directors, we look forward to another year.

- RMHA Website -

If you haven't seen our new website, visit www.raritanmillstone.org. The Guidebook, event calendar, and links to other preservation organizations are all available on our site!

- Guidebook -

Anyone interested in helping the Guidebook Committee in preparing for the March 2006 publication date, please contact Committee Chairman Peter Primavera at 732-247-8880. The committee meets on the Tuesday prior to the monthly Alliance Board meeting. And, of course, all are welcome to attend the monthly Alliance Board meetings, the next of which will be on June 16, 2005 at Van Harlingen Historical Society in Montgomery Township.

-Celebrate New Jersey-

June 2005 is Celebrate New Jersey month!. Visit www.aboutnewjersey.com for a complete listing of events celebrating all that New Jersey has to offer.

-Welcome-

Welcome to new member Dorothy Snedeker, and to new member sites including the Drumthwacket Foundation, the New Brunswick Historical Association, Bound Brook's The Rail on Main Street, the Barron Arts Center, Thomas A. Edison Menlo Park Museum, Trinity Episcopal Church in Woodbridge, and Sayreville Historical Society Museum.

- Peter A. Primavera

The Alliance Tours the Revolution

The last of this year's Sunday Brunch Program Series keyed to the American Revolution in central New Jersey will be held on June 5, 2005. At 2:00 p.m., after a noon brunch at Turning Point Restaurant, we will tour Monmouth Battlefield State Park, the scene of a turning-point battle between the American and British armies in 1778.

The program, organized by Christine Retz and Marjorie Freeman, costs \$10, plus an additional restaurant charge for the brunch. Attendees are asked to mail payments at least 5 days in advance to Elyce Jennings, at 851 River Road, Piscataway 08854, in care of Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance, Inc. Please see flyer inside for details.

The Sunday Series has comprised tours of sites featured by the National Park Service in its 2002 study on the feasibility of a Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area in New Jersey, still pending before Congress. The proposed Crossroads NHA comprises 14 counties, and includes a national park, 5 state parks, 13 National Historic Landmarks, and more than 250 other National Register of Historic Places sites and districts, all having resources of the Revolutionary War period. The mission of the Crossroads NHA will be to raise popular understanding of the historical significance of these sites, to provide an area-wide network between established historic sites, state parks, private property owners, local governments, not-for-profits, and other civic organizations in order to facilitate further preservation and to offer a forum for new initiatives on site use, management, and historical interpretation.

For more information about the Crossroads Heritage Area, go to <http://www.revolutionarynj.org>.

Over the summer, check our website, www.raritanmillstone.org, for information on a new Sunday Brunch Program Series beginning in September.

Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance

P.O. Box 5583

Somerset, N.J. 08875-5583

*an organization of individuals and
historic sites working
to promote and preserve the heritage of Central
New Jersey*

officers

President: Peter A. Primavera
Vice President: Ann Suydam
Secretary: Sarah Israel
Treasurer: Everett Zabriskie

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Kathleen Williamson
John Allen
Paula Henry
Bonita Grant

*The organization meets the
third Thursday of each month, with the
exception of July and August,
at designated historic and museum sites
in the region.*

Link editor: Catherine Bull
732-247-8880



Marjorie Freeman, Ann Suydam, Peter Primavera, Rett Zabriskie, and Sarah Israel

OFFICERS RE-ELECTED FOR 2005-06

Peter Primavera, owner of the Cultural Resource Consulting Group, of Highland Park, was re-elected president of the Raritan – Millstone Heritage Alliance for a second year, at its annual membership meeting April 21, at the Cranbury Inn. Vice president Ann Suydam, secretary Sarah Israel, and treasurer Everett Zabriskie were also re-elected for new one-year terms.

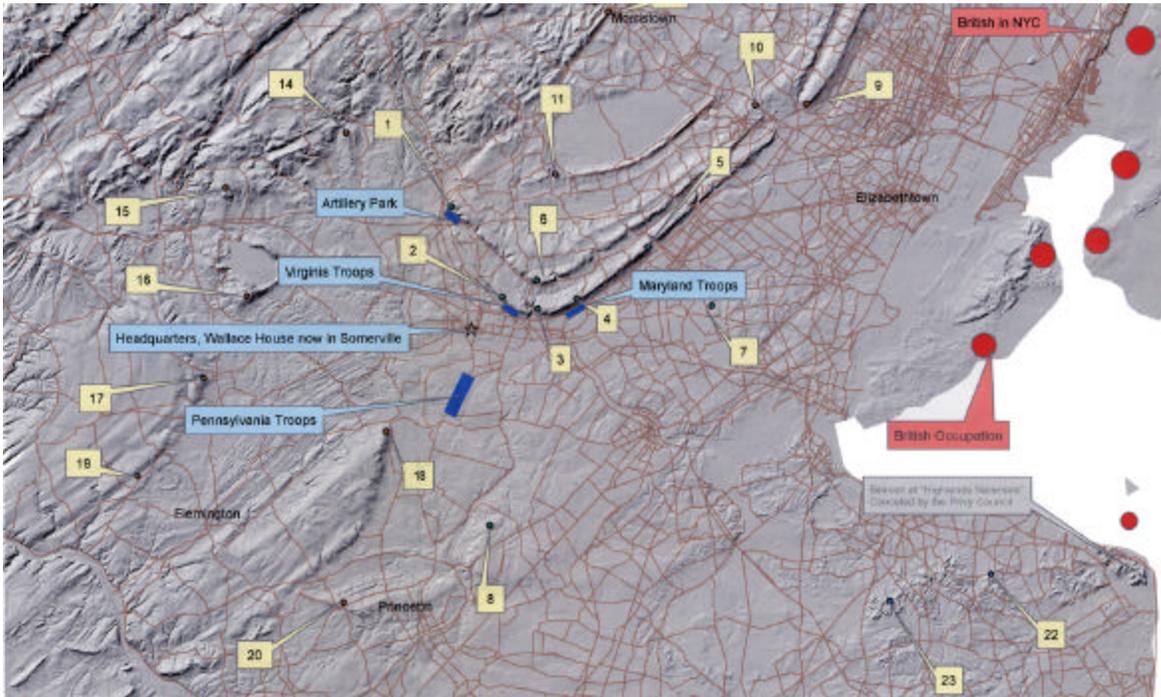
Dr. Paul Jennings, Michael Boylan, Marjorie Freeman, Sarah Israel, and Constance O'Grady were re-elected to new three-year terms on the trustee board. Carol Natarelli, of Piscataway, was elected to a first term on the board, succeeding Patricia Ferrara, who has stepped down. Natarelli is active in the Piscataway Historical and Heritage Association and the Fellowship for the Metlar-Bodine House.

Bonita Grant, chief Special Collections librarian at Rutgers' Alexander Library in New Brunswick, was also elected to a first three-year board on the trustee board, expanding the board from 18 to 19 members. The Alliance is hoping that the board can be further expanded at future membership meetings.

Alexander B. Magoum, director of the David Sarnoff Library, of West Windsor, spoke on the 1938 CBS radio broadcast of the Orson Welles documentary-style presentation of H. G. Wells' novella, War of the Worlds, about a Martian spaceship attack on Earth. Wells' story was set in England, but was transferred to nearby Grovers Mill, New Jersey, part of the Township of West Windsor, for the purpose of the radio broadcast. The Library is part of the David Sarnoff Research Center on Route 1, acquired about 30 years ago from the RCA Corp., the 1920s radio-electronics enterprise established by Sarnoff.

Carl Helstrom, president of the Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society, welcomed Alliance members to the township. Thomas Ingegneri, co-owner of the Cranbury Inn, gave members a tour of an 18th-century style barn-banquet room being built behind the hostelry.

- George Dawson



2004 James Raleigh map of Revolutionary War signal-beacon sites along the Watchungs and other nearby high-points, mustering New Jersey militiamen to arms in the event of a British attack. The troop deployment indicators refer to the 1778-79 Middlebrook encampment.

The Beacon Hills of Central Jersey

By George Dawson

The war for the independence of the lower half of British North America may have been supposed to be essentially over by the spring of 1780.

The French Alliance of 1778 with the fledgling United States had brought French and British fleets together in deadly sea-battles, but off the coasts of Europe and the islands of the Caribbean, rather than anywhere the New Jersey and New York cantonments of the American Continental Army under General George Washington.

Washington's own day-long engagement with the British Army at Monmouth Court House, New Jersey in the summer of 1778 had ended with the Americans holding the field; and came to be commonly regarded as a major American victory, perhaps a decisive one, demonstrating the ability of the newly-drilled Continental Army to beat the English in open daylight combat.

Col. John Graves Simcoe, commander of the Queen's Rangers, had staged a terrifying raid across central New Jersey in October 1777, destroying Army boats and the Raritan Reformed Church on the upper Raritan River in Somerset County, and the Somerset County Court House on the Millstone River. But Simcoe had been captured by a small band of militia commanded by Col. John Neilson and Capt. Moses Guest outside New Brunswick; and the raid was, therefore, to be deemed a failure. The British raided Patriot-held territory at their own great risk.

The British themselves, who had spent much of the early part of the war chasing Washington around New Jersey, seemed to agree with the assessment that Washington's Army was now impossible to beat, sending most of their fleet and 5,000 to 6,000 soldiers, under commander-in-chief Henry Clinton, out of New York Harbor in late December, to lay siege to Charleston, South Carolina, more than 700 nautical miles away. Washington biographer James T. Flexner wrote in 1967:

Now, in that central region, the British occupied only their New York base; and the force that remained there seemed too weak to do more than cover behind its defenses.

Those guilty of such suppositions were mistaken.

On June 6, 1780, most of the remaining British and German troops in New York (about 6,000), under Hessian general Wilhelm von Knyphausen, commander of the New York garrison in Clinton's absence, and British brigadier Thomas Stirling, crossed the Arthur Kill at Elizabethtown, and headed toward the Hobart Gap at Springfield, the opening in the Watchung ridges that led most directly to Washington's camp at Morristown.

Independently (and unbeknown to Knyphausen), Clinton was returning to New York with the British fleet and his South Carolina troops, following a mid-May Southern victory over the sizable American troop garrison in Charleston, with plans of his own to immediately attack Washington through Middlesex County, via a gap in the Watchungs behind Perth Amboy.

Thomas Fleming, the Revolutionary War (and World War II) history writer and novelist, wrote of the Knyphausen-Stirling assault on New Jersey, and its climatic "Battle of Springfield" 17 days later, in 1973, in one of his early pre-Bicentennial treatments on the American Revolution. He said then that many of his history-community colleagues expressed puzzlement at his choice of topics, certainly knowing of the Battle of Springfield, but not thinking it important enough for a book. Fleming disagreed, and published his book under the title: The Forgotten Victory: the battle for New Jersey in 1780.

Two years later, in a Bicentennial pamphlet in the "New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience" series commissioned by the state Historical Commission, Fleming wrote:

... recent research suggests that the Battle of Springfield (the name ...usually used to describe the entire invasion) was one of the crucial turning points of the War for Independence.

The British had sound military reasons for fighting the battle. ... if it had been fought according to the intentions and plans of the British commander-in-chief Sir Henry Clinton, it almost certainly would have resulted in an American defeat, that would (in turn) have led directly to the collapse of the Revolution.

Fleming credited the British-Hessian defeat in New Jersey, 225 years ago, to two factors: the lack of communication and coordination between Knyphausen and Clinton on each other's invasion plans, and the New Jersey militia.

He wrote in his state Bicentennial pamphlet 26 years ago:

Knyphausen's 6,000 men out-numbered Washington's army by 2 to 1. But neither the German general, nor his Loyalist advisers, foresaw that they would meet resistance (not from the discouraged regulars, but from the amateur soldiers of New Jersey: the militia. Springfield was the New Jersey militia's finest hour.

The militia were called out by a series of militia fires lit on the night of June 5-6, 1780, from pre-selected knolls atop the Watchung ridges. James Raleigh, recently head of the League of New Jersey Societies (and currently president of the Friends of Monmouth Battlefield) developed a map on the known (or likely) locations of the various beacon sites, many devised a year earlier under the leadership of Major General

William Alexander, of Somerset County (generally known by his Scottish title of Lord Stirling, but no relation to British brigadier Stirling of "Springfield" fame) during Washington's Middlebrook encampment of 1778-79. Raleigh spoke on the Watchung beacons, and distributed his map, in one of the Middlebrook 225th-anniversary events arranged last year in Somerset County. Raleigh had worked on a beacon commemoration in Monmouth County during the American Revolution Bicentennial period 25 years earlier; and expressed hope that some kind of commemoration could be arranged for the "Springfield" 225th this year. Such arrangements have not transpired, although related observations of the 1780 British-Hessian attack and the fighting at Springfield are being planned in Union County.

The militia troops of Middlesex and Somerset counties must have been in the thick of the battle, although much of their participation apparently has not been recorded, giving further credence to Fleming's choice of book title, in his account of The Forgotten Victory.

Fleming, in his research, found reference to:

Captain Nathaniel FitzRandolph, of Woodbridge, just released from his British prison in New York (in exchange, as it happened, for the American release of the captured British raider, John Graves Simcoe).

FitzRandolph (says Fleming) although weak from mistreatment by his English jailers:

... seized his musket, mustered his men, and marched.

Col. Frederick Frelinghuysen, commander of the Somerset County, of Hillsborough (now Millstone), a former teacher at Queens College (now Rutgers University) and participant in the Battle of Trenton, and later a U.S. Senator.

No reference, however, is found in published accounts to the marching of Col. John Neilson and Capt. Moses Guest, of New Brunswick, the heroes of the '79 Simcoe Raid, although they, almost certainly, must have been involved.

The 1780 Knyphausen-Stirling attack on the encampment of the Continental Army in New Jersey effectively ended on June 23 in the town of Springfield, at the approach to the Watchung gap on the road to Morristown, where a combination of militia units, the New Jersey Continentals, a militia brigade fighting in Washington's Army, and some Continental troops; and the leadership passion of James Caldwell, pastor of the destroyed Elizabethtown Presbyterian Church, rallying the defenders by tearing up hymnals for cannon wadding.

There, the strong British-Hessian drive towards Morristown is stopped. Commander-in-Chief Henry Clinton, perhaps piqued that Knyphausen launched his attack before the one he had been planning had gotten under way, called his initiating Hessian subordinate back to New York. The episode is reduced to a footnote in Flexner's George Washington biography thusly:

... Clinton had tried to take advantage of the situation, but had abandoned the attempt when he became convinced that Washington would do nothing rash. The total result, so Clinton's aide André wrote, was that several hundred Hessians took the opportunity of deserting.

? ? ?

Fleming is returning to the scene of his earlier exploits in the Union County commemoration of this Revolutionary War "turning-point" episode, as guest of the Springfield Historical Society, with a talk on the event on Sunday, June 5, at the 1st Presbyterian Church of Springfield, starting at 2 pm. Re-enactments of the Battle of Springfield will be staged in the township on the weekend of June 25 and June 26, close to the 225th anniversary date of the battle itself.

Other events are planned in June at Kean College, and nearby Liberty Hall, the home of New Jersey's Revolutionary War governor William Livingston (and ancestral home of the Kean family), which was also a center for fighting in the 1780 assault. Information on these events can be obtained from the Union County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

The town of Green Brook in Somerset County will play its part with a re-enactment of one of the beacon alarm fires on Monday evening, June 6, at Washington Rock State Park (from where Washington watched the movement of British troops following their evacuation of New Brunswick in 1777). "Beacon deacon" James Raleigh will speak, the fire will be lit, and the souls of FitzRandolph, Frelinghuysen and others of the Middlesex and Somerset militias of 225 years ago will march to their destiny in history.



www.raritanmillstone.org

2005 SCHEDULED BOARD MEETINGS

June 16

Van Harlingen Historical Society
Dirck Gulick House on rt. 601
Montgomery

The Historical Society is housed in the Dirck Gulick House, a one and one-half story Dutch vernacular building constructed in 1752. It is a rare example of a Dutch-built stone house in a Dutch community typified by frame houses. In the Gulick House there is evidence that a process of assimilation was underway in the house-building culture of other nationalities present in New Jersey in this time period. The house has recently been named to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places.

September 15

The State Theatre
15 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick

The State Theatre is a magnificently renovated 1800-seat, 1921 vaudeville theatre presenting a diversity of world class events including international orchestras, Broadway musicals, jazz productions, dance ensembles, operas, country music, educational programs, kid's events, "World Music" and more.

October 20

Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission
20 Green Street, Engineering Department, Somerville

Somerset County, located on one of New Jersey's primary growth corridors, has experienced rapid population growth and land development. As a result, County residents have developed a growing appreciation of existing cultural resources and a recognition of the need to preserve as much of the County's heritage as possible before it is lost. The Commission was created on August 3, 1983.

November 17

Woodlawn, Eagleton Institute
191 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick

Wood Lawn, the mansion which houses the Rutgers' Eagleton Institute of Politics, was built in 1830 by colonel James Neilson (1784-1862), a member of the third generation of a prosperous family with historic ties to Rutgers and New Brunswick. The current appearance of the house combines several distinct architectural styles including Neo-Classical, Second Empire, and Colonial Revival. Wood Lawn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

December 15, 2005

Winants Hall, Rutgers University
7 College Avenue, New Brunswick

Constructed in 1890, Winants Hall was Rutgers first dormitory. It is named for Garret E. Winants, a wealthy philanthropist from Bayonne who in 1889 joined the Board of Trustees and a year later presented a sketch of a proposed dormitory building and a gift of \$75,000 to pay for its construction. Winants Hall served as the sole dormitory for Rutgers until 1915. In the late 1940's the building was converted for use by departments and administrative offices of the University. In November 1990, Winants Hall was rededicated following restoration. It currently serves the Offices of Alumni Relations, the Rutgers University Foundation, and the Office of University Counsel.

all meetings start at 1:30 pm unless otherwise announced



The Proprietary House

Welcomes You

On Sunday, June 19, 2005, at 1:00 pm & 3:00 pm, the colonial Militia, led by Col. Nathaniel Heard will reenact the arrest of Governor William Franklin as it occurred on June 19, 1776, 229 years ago. You are invited to witness this historical recreation.

After the arrest, plan to tour the Royal Governor's Mansion and enjoy light refreshments.

Proprietary House - Reenactment of Arrest of William Franklin

149 Kearny Avenue ~ Perth Amboy, New Jersey 08861

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Number of People Attending _____ Check enclosed _____

I can not attend, please accept by donation of \$ _____

Kindly RSVP by June 17, 2005, Pre-register via mail, e-mail, fax or phone

Donation \$5.00

149 Kearny Avenue, Perth Amboy, New Jersey 08861

e-mail: info@proprietaryhouse.org Fax 732-826-8889 Telephone 732-826-5527

Visit our website at www.proprietaryhouse.org

Announcements



St. Peter the Apostle R.C. Church, New Brunswick

Registering History in the Raritan-Millstone Valley

St. Peter the Apostle Roman Catholic Church, on Somerset Street, New Brunswick (across from Rutgers' historically registered Queen's Campus; and a four-block section of Stockton Street, in Hightstown, received approval for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places on April 6, from the State Review Board for Historic Sites, meeting in Trenton.

The church was nominated for architectural significance, and supported before the board by Ann Parsekian, of Dennis Bertland Associates. The Stockton Street historic district was nominated for architectural and historic significance; and supported by Kenneth Kalmis of Cultural Resource Consulting Group.

CELEBRATE NEW JERSEY !

Acting Governor Richard J. Codey has issued an official proclamation that June 2005 is Celebrate New Jersey month! This is the first ever, statewide festival to celebrate New Jersey and its contributions to history, the arts, commerce, education, and culture.

Throughout the month of June, participating sites will be offering many events and activities which will highlight the greatness of the Garden State. It's all about celebrating New Jersey and showcasing the great things there are to do here. New Jersey is worth celebrating, so spread the word! Visit the Celebrate New Jersey website for a complete listing of events throughout the state. You can also register your organization and list your programs through the website below.

<http://www.aboutnewjersey.com/CelebrateNJ/index.php>

The Delaware & Raritan Canal: The Past, The Present, and The Promise

Celebrate the Delaware and Raritan Canal at The College of New Jersey in Ewing on Wednesday, June 1, 2005. The all-day conference will include speakers and interactive workshops followed by an evening reception. Speakers will focus on the Canal's rich history, its current uses and its future potential. Conference participants are encouraged to engage in discussions and share their ideas. At the conclusion of the day's activities, conference sessions will summarize the discussions and participant input before moving on to a reception in the evening at the Prallsville Mill in Stockton, New Jersey. Live music will be featured.

The conference organizer is the Municipal Land Use Center at The College of New Jersey. The registration fee is \$50 for the day's event, \$20 for the evening event, and \$65 for the combined registration. An additional fee may be charged for registrations after May 20th.

The Municipal Land Use Center should be contacted for additional information and on-line registration at:

<http://www.tcnj.edu/~mluc/index.php>,
or by telephone at 609-771-2832.

Your Link to the Public

The Link is on a quarterly publication schedule, with copies distributed in February, May, September, and November. News of major upcoming events for possible placement in the newsletter may be mailed, emailed or faxed to the address below. Notices should reach the editor by the 5th day of the month previous to the publication date.

Catherine Bull, Editor, CRCG, 415 Cleveland Avenue, Highland Park, NJ 08904

cbull@crcg.net, 732-247-2888 fax, 732-247-8880 phone

Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Membership Application

Name: _____

Contact (if organization): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

\$30 ____ Individual \$30 ____ Site

Please make check payable to Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Please return: Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance, P.O. Box 5583, Somerset, NJ 08875-5583

The Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance

The Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance is a group of Middlesex, Somerset and Mercer County sites, historical and eventful, located along the Raritan and Millstone Rivers. The Alliance works to help these sites preserve and promote their rich and eventful heritage and culture through educational and interpretive activities and materials; to promote, publicize, develop tours and programs of the historic resources along the River trails.

Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance
P. O. Box 5583
Somerset, NJ 08875-5583

