



Volume 13, No. 2

**Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance**

Spring 2011

[www.raritanmillstone.org](http://www.raritanmillstone.org)

## **THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE RARITAN-MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE**

You are cordially invited to join us for the Annual Meeting to be held in the Lafayette Tavern Room of the historic Cranbury Inn, 21 South Main Street, Cranbury, NJ, on Thursday, April 14, 2011, between 1:00 and 3:00 pm. Following the luncheon, the order of business will be the election of directors for the Class of 2014. (See page three for election news.) The luncheon will cost \$30.00 inclusive and **reservations are required**. To reserve, call Elyce Jennings at 732-463-0767 and mail your check, payable to the RMHA, to Mrs. Elyce M. Jennings, 851 River Road, Piscataway, NJ 08854; include your choice of either chicken marsala, tenderloin tips Diana, or seared salmon. Please register by April 7.

Our distinguished guest speaker will be Mr. John D. Katerba, chairman of the Monroe Township Preservation Commission and the restoration of The Dey Farm and the Prospect Plains School House. He will address us on the topic, "The Cause of Preservation During These Challenging Times." (Cranbury Inn phone: 609-655-5595.)



## **MAY MEETING TO BE HELD AT THE HISTORIC VAN VEGHTEN HOUSE**

Built in the early 1700s, the Van Veghten House served as headquarters for Quartermaster General Nathaniel Green during the Middlebrook Cantonment of 1778-1779. The Somerset County Historical Society now operates the site, Tuesdays, 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m., Saturdays, 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. Closed December through March. For more information, please visit [www.schsnj.org](http://www.schsnj.org) or call 908-218-1281. The house is located at 9 Van Veghten Drive in Bridgewater. Join us at the Van Veghten House for the May meeting. See page two for details.



## **THE DERRICK VAN VEGHTEN HOUSE**

### **HEADQUARTERS OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Overlooking the broad meadowlands stretching along the Raritan River in Bridgewater Township, Somerset County, the Van Veghten House occupies a site that was part of a vast tract of land originally purchased from Native Americans in the early 1680s by the East Jersey Proprietors. Known as the "The Second Indian Tract," the parcel was acquired by Captain John Palmer, Esquire, of Staten Island, in 1683. He in turn conveyed the property to Thomas Codrington. In 1694 Codrington and his wife, Margaret, sold the 836 acres of their holdings, "All that big tract of Land or plantation ... upon the North side of the Raritan River In the Countie of Sumersett (sic)" which were bounded to the west by land of John White and on the east by other property of the grantor, to yeoman Michael Dereckson Van Veghten for £300.5.20.

(continued on page five)

The next scheduled meeting of the  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

will be held on May 19, 2011  
from 1:30—3:00 pm at the

**VAN VEGHTEN HOUSE**

Representatives from all Alliance  
sites are encouraged to attend.

**DIRECTIONS TO THE VAN VEGHTEN  
HOUSE, 9 Van Veghten Drive, Bridgewater**

**NJ TURNPIKE:**

Exit 10/I-287 North. See directions below.

**GARDEN STATE PARKWAY:** Exit 127/Route  
I-287. See directions below.

**INTERSTATE 287:** Follow I-287 North to Exit  
13B/Somerville/Route 28 West. Proceed 1.1  
miles and turn left at a light onto Finderne  
Avenue. Continue across East Main Street  
(light) and turn right (in about ½ mile) at the  
jughandle before the next light. The sign says,  
“Van Veghten House/Somerset Cty Hist. Soc.”  
At the stop sign, turn right. The Van Veghten  
House is at the end of the road on the left.

**From the south:** Route 206 to River Road  
(C.R. 533). Continue about ten miles through  
the town of Manville. Just north of town, turn  
left at the light onto Bridgewater Campus  
Drive. The Van Veghten House is at the end  
of the road on the left.

**YOUR LINK TO THE PUBLIC:** *The Link*, the newsletter  
of the Raritan–Millstone Heritage Alliance, is a quarterly  
publication.

News of major, upcoming events for possible inclusion  
in the fall issue must be mailed or emailed to the editor no  
later than August 15, 2011. Please send all items to:  
George Dawson, Editor, 12 Llewellyn Place, New  
Brunswick, NJ 08901; 732 249-2670 or to Ann Suydam,  
Associate Editor, 54 Skillman’s Lane, Somerset, NJ 08873;  
732-846-7448.

Please send photos (in .jpeg or .tiff) to Linda Barth, 908-  
722-7428; [barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net). Material submitted electronically  
should be in WORD format. Photographs will be scanned  
and returned.

**Raritan-Millstone Heritage  
Alliance**

P.O. Box 5583  
Somerset, NJ 08875-5583  
[www.raritanmillstone.org](http://www.raritanmillstone.org)

*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**

President, Donald Johnstone Peck  
Vice President, Susan C. Keating  
Secretary, Constance M. O’Grady  
Treasurer, Stephen Russell

**DIRECTORS**

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Barbara Westergaard

The Board of Directors meets on the third  
Thursday of March, May, September,  
October, and November at designated  
historic and museum member  
sites in the region.



## Living History in South Bound Brook and Bound Brook



Experience living history and learn about the American War for Independence! Featured speakers include **Robert A. Mayers**, author of *The War Man: The True Story of a Citizen-Soldier Who Fought from Quebec to Yorktown*. Also: 18th-century soldiers' encampment and street battles, ceremony at Old Stone Arch Bridge, pasta dinner, Sunday buffet breakfast, historic house tours and more!

Join us for an exciting and historic weekend April 9–10, 2011! The two-day program explores the American Revolutionary War during the time frame of the Battle of Bound Brook and the Middlebrook encampments, 1777–1779.

Learn about and experience this important period in New Jersey's and America's history. Weekend activities include:

◆ **18th century Soldiers' Encampment** on the grounds of the Abraham Staats House, 17 Von Steuben Lane,



South Bound Brook 08880. Come walk through camp and see what life was like for American and British troops during the time of the Revolution.

◆ **Historic house tours:** The Abraham Staats House (original structure c. 1740) was home to the Staats family for nearly 200 years and served as the headquarters for Gen. Washington's "Drillmaster," General Baron von Steuben.

(Photos courtesy of the Friends of Abraham Staats House website.)



### IN MEMORIAM: KATHRYN H. STRYKER

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of Kathryn H. Stryker, the treasurer of RMHA since 2007 and a longtime member of the Van Harlingen Historical Society. Kathryn, 83, died suddenly on March 2, 2011. She will be greatly missed by her family and many friends of the RMHA, Van Harlingen Historical Society and the Finderne Reformed Church, Bridgewater, where she was also the treasurer.

A former employee of the Somerset Trust Company, Kathryn resided in Bridgewater before moving to Montgomery in 1965. A wise counselor, gracious lady, and avid gardener, she generously contributed of her time in keeping the financial records of the RMHA. Rest in peace.

### RARITAN-MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE ELECTION OF OFFICERS

At the Annual Meeting on April 14 (see page one), the Alliance will elect the trustees for the Class of 2014. The class consists of:

Sarah Israel  
Paul Jennings  
Joanne Kaiser  
Carol Natarelli  
Constance O'Grady  
Laurel VanLeer  
Barbara Westergaard

At the March board meeting, Stephen Russell was elected treasurer to fill the term of the late Kathryn Stryker.

## THE VAN LIEW-SUYDAM HOUSE

By Chris Retz, President, The Meadows Foundation;

photo credit: © Vivian S. Bedoya.

This property was initially part of the Frederick Van Liew tract, acquired in 1701 as part of a land deal between former Dutch colonial residents of Flatbush, LI, and NJ speculators John Harrison and John Willcocks. In 1811 the 71-acre farmstead was sold to Joseph Suydam, who was himself a Dutchman from Brooklyn, born there in 1772. The present house was constructed by his son Peter in 1875.

Suydam and his heirs farmed the property until the 1920s, when it changed hands twice before being sold to John R. French. He continued to work the land until a storm destroyed several of the original farm buildings in 1950. The final owners of the



house, Robert and Dorothy O'Connell, bought the property in 1961, converted the house to a modern residence, and demolished several more of the outbuildings. Nonetheless, the agricultural land around the residence continued in cultivation prior to state acquisition as part of the Six Mile Run Reservoir Project in 1973. The Meadows Foundation began leasing the structures and the land from Franklin Township in October 1988.

The architectural form and development of the house have been somewhat obscured by both recent renovation work and the building campaign of Peter Suydam in the mid-1870s. The overall form of the building places it firmly in the tradition of Italianate farmhouses common throughout the United States during the latter part of the 19th century. Following a pattern employed often by thrifty New Jersey farmers, Suydam reused pieces of an earlier house or houses in the construction of his large 1875 dwelling. He also built on the site of an earlier dwelling that now forms the better part of the dining room wing. How much of the fabric of this earlier wing is intact is not clear. While the foundation and framing of the dining room wing were examined for conclusive evidence of date of construction, the architect and his team were frustrated by a lack of consistent physical evidence that could be corroborated in the property history. The original structure was probably a story-and-a-half, braced farm building with a small lean-to constructed on the north side. The original roof also reused old timbers. The 1875 farmhouse was only minimally altered during the 20th century when the north kitchen lean-to was rebuilt and a southern room added to serve as an auxiliary kitchen.

Only one of the outbuildings, which numbered as many as twelve in the early 20th century, exists today. This structure, called the granary, was used by the last occupants of the farm as a retail facility for sales of produce and farm goods.

Today, the house is handicapped accessible via an ADA standard ramp on the south side. The interior boasts formal, north-facing front rooms, while the everyday family rooms face the sunny rear of the house. All of these are characteristic of 19th-century vernacular architecture.



**Attend the Meadows Foundation's Springtime Tea and visit this lovely home. (See poster, page five.)**

## SPRING SUNDAY SERIES RETURNS!

Experience the history of Millstone on Sunday, May 22 at the Hillsborough Reformed Church in the Borough of Millstone.

"A Sunday in Millstone" will begin with a worship service at 10 a.m. at the church, 1 Amwell Road (jct. of Route 533/River Road and Route 650), with the Rev. Fred Muller officiating.

If you cannot join us for worship, you may wish to attend the rededication of the grave marker of DAR "Real Daughter" Sarah Van Nostrand, a lifelong resident of Millstone and daughter of an Revolutionary War Patriot, at the East Millstone Burying Ground at 11:30 a.m.

At a catered luncheon and lecture at 1:00 pm in the Church Hall, borough historian Bob Mettler will speak about "History of Millstone" and "Scenic Byways of the D&R Canal." The cost of the luncheon is \$25.00. To reserve a place, please make your check payable to RMHA and write "for May 22, 2011" on the memo line. Mail it to Mrs. Sarah Israel, 14 Continental Road, Somerset, NJ 08873 (732-828-3508) before May 16.

Before the luncheon, you may wish to walk around the historic villages of East Millstone and Millstone on your own. Thanks to Sarah Israel for arranging this event, sponsored by the RMHA and the Camp Middlebrook Chapter of the DAR, Bound Brook.



  
Presents:  
*Springtime Tea*  
At The **VAN LIEW-SUYDAM HOUSE**  
Located at: 280 S. Middlebush Rd., Somerset, NJ  
**Saturday, April 30th, 2-4pm**  
Bring Mom for an early Mother's Day treat!  
Menu: Tea, finger sandwiches (from Teuberry's), scones with dotted cream and preserves plus desserts  
Speakers will be on hand to explain the architecture and life in the Van Liew-Suydam house during the Victorian era.  
**\$25 per person for food, speakers and surprises.**  
*Yes, I would love to attend the Springtime Tea!*  
NAME \_\_\_\_\_ No Attending \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
I HAVE ENCLOSED MY CHECK FOR (\$25 X NUMBER OF PEOPLE) \_\_\_\_\_  
TO RECEIVE YOUR TICKETS, PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK.  
PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:  
THE MEADOWS FOUNDATION,  
1289 EASTON AVE., SOMERSET, NJ, 08873  
This fundraiser is being held to help us maintain this fine property.  
**Reserve early: The Meadows Foundation, 1289 Easton Avenue,  
Somerset, NJ 08873. Questions? Contact Chris Retz, 732-748-7657;  
[chrisflp@aol.com](mailto:chrisflp@aol.com). (See p. 7.)**

Michael Van Veghten (1663-1737) was a descendent of early Dutch immigrants. His grandfather, Teunis Dirckse Van Veghten, had immigrated from Veghten (near Utrecht), Holland in 1638. By the early 1700s, Michael Van Veghten had become a well-established resident of Somerset County with extensive land holdings. From his ample plantation, he donated land for the First Dutch Church of Raritan, which was built in 1721.

Though it is not known precisely when he built his house on the banks of the Raritan River, it was probably during the very late 17th century or early 18th century. A deed from 1722 includes a survey map depicting "Micheels van veghteens house" in the vicinity of the present structure.

Michael Van Veghten married twice, and with his first wife, Marytje Parker, had four children, two of whom survived to adulthood. His marriage to second wife, Jannetje De Mont, produced three children: Jannetje, Derrick, and Jantien. Upon his death in 1737, his significant real estate holdings in Somerset County passed to his daughter Jannetje and son Derrick (1699-1781). Jannetje inherited "All that Plantation and Tract of Land on the South Side of the Raritan River...bought of Philip Headman," and Derrick inherited the family plantation, at least 1000 acres, to the north of the Raritan River, including the "Plantation in which my said wife and I now live..." (see next page)

Derrick Van Veghten (1699-1781) apparently inherited his father's fine reputation, as well as his land. He was chosen as a Somerset County representative to the New Jersey Assembly in 1743 and 1744 and served as commissioner of highways. Sometime during the first half of the 18th century he donated land for the bridge that crossed the Raritan River to the southeast of the Van Veghten house. The bridge was known as the "Van Veghten Bridge" or alternately, the "Long Bridge." The bridge was at the approximate site of the modern bridge crossing the Raritan River on Finderne Avenue.

The American Revolution had a great impact on Derrick Van Veghten. In 1770, he acted as "chairman of a group of merchants that renewed an agreement to resist the Stamp Act." The proximity of his residence to the Old York Road, one of the main routes across the state, and to the Van Veghten Bridge, an important Raritan River crossing point, ensured his involvement in the events of the war.

On December 6, 1776, when the British army was pursuing Washington's army south through New Jersey, Captain Johann Ewald, a Hessian officer of the Field Jager Corps, visited the Van Veghten plantation. Troops under Lord Cornwallis's command had bivouacked near Van Veghten's bridge, when around 9:00 pm Ewald was ordered by Cornwallis to lead a small detachment to the Van Veghten place to "pick up the master of the house, as well as a mounted guide who knew the Morristown area, and bring them back." Ewald left a vivid account in his diary of his raid on the plantation and encounter with the "master of the house," Derrick Van Veghten.

After the battles of Trenton and Princeton, the remnants of Washington's rag-tag army crossed the Van Veghten Bridge and passed by the Van Veghten House on their way to Morristown. During the winter and spring campaigns of 1777, British troops were stationed in New Brunswick, while American units were encamped around Bound Brook and along the First Watchung Mountain. Numerous skirmishes occurred as British soldiers conducted foraging raids and other probes up the Raritan Valley. By late spring, the British decided to withdraw from New Jersey.

During the second Middlebrook encampment, between November 28, 1778, and June 3, 1779, Continental Army troops again occupied Derrick Van Veghten's neighborhood. General Nathaniel Greene, Quarter Master General, used the Van Veghten house as his headquarters, while units of the army camped nearby. Troops from Pennsylvania camped south of the house across the river, and the Artificers were about a mile to the northeast.

Under cover of night on October 25, 1779, British Lieutenant-Colonel John Simcoe led a force of "Queen's Rangers" (American Tories) from Staten Island to Van Veghten's bridge. They were to capture Governor Livingston, mistakenly thought to be staying nearby at Philip Van Horne's house, and destroy large flatboats stored at the bridge. Discovering that Livingston was not at the Van Horne home, the force returned to the bridge and set fire to the flatboats. The soldiers proceeded to the Dutch Meeting and used hand grenades to burn the church. Simcoe rationalized this because he thought the church had sheltered a sniper and served as a supply depot.

Finally, at the end of July 1781, the French Army under General Rochambeau marched past the Van Veghten House and across the bridge en route to Yorktown. Derrick was 82 years old at the time, but he would have witnessed the march. He died a few months later and was interred in the burying grounds at the site of the First Dutch Church of Raritan.

During Michael's lifetime, the tract of land with the house was sold and then repurchased, but at the end of his life, in 1831, he was living in the house. Michael's son Richard Van Veghten inherited the house and lived there until 1843. By that time, the size of the farm had dwindled to 125 acres. During the subsequent four decades, the house and farm passed through a number of owners, until it was purchased by Bernhard Meyer in 1897. Meyer was an emigrant and farmer from Oldenburg Germany. During the years he lived in the house, Meyer acquired a total of 500 acres and formed a breeding company specializing in Holstein cattle. His heirs eventually sold the land to the Singer Manufacturing Company, but Bernhard Meyer, Jr. leased the house and continued to live there until 1970. In 1973, the house was deeded to the Somerset County Historical Society.

Today, the Van Veghten House is the headquarters of the Somerset County Historical Society and houses a research library and small museum. While it still overlooks the broad meadowlands stretching along the Raritan River as it did 300 years ago, the house is now surrounded on the north and east by modern industrial buildings. The structure has recently undergone extensive renovation thanks to grants from Somerset County and should continue to server the historical community for many years to come.

## CALENDAR OF CENTRAL JERSEY EVENTS

**Saturday, April 2**—The Blackwells Mills Canal House Association will host a talk on the Delaware and Raritan Canal at 2:00 pm, corner of the Blackwells Mills Causeway and Canal Road, Franklin Township. Linda Barth, canal enthusiast, will introduce you to the people and structures that made the canal work. Come learn more about this gem of central New Jersey. Questions? Contact the Blackwells Mills Canal House at 732-873-2133.

**Saturday and Sunday, April 9 and 10—Battle of Bound Brook**—Mark your calendar for this year's Battle of Bound Brook. Encampments, living history at the Abraham Staats House. Admission charged for entry to house tour/lecture. The grounds and street battles are free. Make sure you tell your friends to hold the date, Huzzah! Hope to see you there! (See story, page three.)

**Thursday, April 14**—Sayreville Historical Society hosts Tom Gallo, who will speak on "A Historical Review of Railroads in the greater Sayreville area." A collector of railroad memorabilia, Mr. Gallo is the author of three volumes on railroad history and the economics and social issues of a railroad. 732-727-2607. 7:30 P.M., in the Sayreville Senior Center, 423 Main Street (at the intersection of Main Street and Pulaski Avenue), Sayreville, NJ.

**Saturday, April 16**—"Ma, Ma, Where's My Pa?" Pre-1900 Presidential Scandals. Van Wickle House, 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset 08873; 732-748-7657. 2:00 pm. \$10 per person

**Saturday, April 16**—League of Historical Societies of NJ bus tour of sites in Newark at Cherry Blossom Festival time. \$45 cost raises funds for the League and the NJ Historical Society. For details, contact Linda Barth, 908-240-0488 or [barths@att.net](mailto:barths@att.net). Elizabeth Del Tufo, the premier tour guide for the city of Newark, will lead us around the city that she loves. Travel through downtown, the college/university complex, and past the Essex County Courthouse. Stops include the first large synagogue to be built in Newark; Penn Station, an Art Deco masterpiece; Branch Brook Park, at the height of the Cherry Blossom Festival; and the beautiful Sacred Heart Cathedral Basilica. Trip leaves from Chatham. To sign up for this tour, send your check for \$45, payable to the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (or just LHSNJ), to Linda Barth, 214 North Bridge Street, Somerville, NJ 08876.

**Saturday, April 30**—Join the Meadows Foundation for its Springtime Tea. Bring Mom for an early Mother's Day treat. The menu will feature a variety of teas, scones with clotted cream, finger sandwiches, preserves, and dessert. Learn about the various modes of Victorian dress. 2:00-4:00 pm at the Van Liew-Suydam House, 280 South Middlebush Road, Somerset 08873. \$25 for food, entertainment, and prizes. Contact Chris Retz at [chrisflp@aol.com](mailto:chrisflp@aol.com) or 732-748-7657. (See flyer on page five.)

**Saturday, May 7—Spirit of the Jerseys State History Fair, Allaire Village, Farmingdale, 11:00-5:00.**

### TRINITY CHURCH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

**Thursday, May 12-Wednesday, June 1**—Exhibit at Barron Arts Center

**Saturday, May 21** (daytime) - Civil War-era living history exhibit and historical tours of church grounds

**Saturday, May 21** (evening) - Gala dinner at Renaissance Woodbridge with silent auction, super 50/50 drawing

**Sunday, May 22** (3 p.m.) Anniversary Eucharist with Bishop Cancell, followed by reception at Parish House, commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Father Counselman's tenure as rector and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the current church building. For details about any of these events, please contact Fr. Robert L. Counselman, Rector, Trinity Episcopal Church, 650 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge NJ 07095; [www.trinitywoodbridge.org](http://www.trinitywoodbridge.org)

**Saturday, June 4**—The May in Montgomery Committee of Van Harlingen Historical Society, Montgomery Township, presents "A Taste of the Sourlands: a Sampling of Wine, Music, Food and History" from 4:00-7:00 p.m. at a magnificent home in the Sourland Mountains with lovely vistas, gardens and barn. A sure-to-be enjoyable event including stories of moonshine in the mountains, the event will benefit the 17th-century Gulick House Cedar Shake Roof Fund. \$45/person. Visit [www.vanharlingen.org](http://www.vanharlingen.org) or call 609-466-8009 for more information about ordering tickets.

**Saturday, June 11**—Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society invites you to attend the dedication of Cranbury's new Civil War Monument at 10 a.m. in Memorial Park near Brainerd Lake in Cranbury. Music by the Philadelphia Brigade Band, an encampment, and a special Civil War exhibit of life in Cranbury during the Civil War at the Cranbury Museum at 4 Park Place East in Cranbury. The exhibit will be open from mid-April to mid-July. More information may be found at [cranburyhistory.org](http://cranburyhistory.org); 609-655-2611.

**Monday, July 4**—"Feu de Joie" (fire of joy), 2 pm, Buccleuch Mansion in Buccleuch Park, New Brunswick. In honor of the Continental Army's celebration of the 2nd anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Talks, cannon fire.

# RARITAN MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE

## Membership Contribution

- Membership Fees
- Individual \$35
- Site \$35
- Household \$50

- Additional Support Levels
- Benefactor \$1,000
- Patron \$ 500
- Sponsor \$ 250
- Donor \$ 100

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form with your check

To: Raritan Millstone Heritage Alliance  
PO Box 5583  
Somerset, NJ 08875-5583

Thank you!  
Visit our website: [raritanmillstone.org](http://raritanmillstone.org)



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*The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance consists of committed individuals and organizations representing sites within the region of Raritan and Millstone systems. In an area that has continually contributed to the strength of the United States, we seek through our programs to promote, protect and preserve an understanding of our rich historical, cultural and educational heritage as we work to be a model for current and future generations by promoting the rich heritage of our American society.*