



Inside the Brick Academy

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

June, 2004

Tour of Presbyterian Churchyard Reveals Bernards Early History By June O. Kennedy

The ancient oak tree stands guard over the cemetery of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, a sentinel protecting those interred. Oldest burial is Henry Haines, 1687-1736; his wife, Anne, 1688-1763, is also there.

A horizontal stone is that of Samuel Brown, 1712-1763, first husband of Mary Whitaker Brown, later called Widow White, at whose tavern General Charles Lee was arrested in 1776. Mr. Brown left funds to supplement the pastors' salaries.

Three and possibly more former church pastors are in the churchyard. Visible stones are those of Dr. Joseph Lamb, third pastor, 1744-1749; Dr. Samuel Kennedy, fourth pastor, 1751-1787, along with his wife and infant son, Ebenezer; and the Rev. Dr. John Rankin, tenth pastor, 1851-1895. The stones of Rev. John Cross, first pastor, 1732-1741 and Rev. Oscar Harris, ninth pastor, 1838-1851 are probably there but their graves cannot be found.

Among the dignitaries resting in the churchyard are: Dr. James Boylan, 1743-1820, personal physician of Lord Stirling; Alexander Finley, 1735-1808, father of Dr. Robert Finley, fifth pastor; Henry Southard, 1747-1842, former US statesman and father of Samuel L. Southard, US Senator and NJ Governor. Revolutionary War heroes include Colonel Israel Rickey, 1744-1821; Captain Gavin McCoy, 1737-1800; Captain Joseph Riggs, ____-1776; and Edward Lewis, Esq., 1750-1817. Also interred there are Mary Lewis Kinnan, 1763-1848, local woman captured by Indians in western Virginia and returned to Basking Ridge by her

brother, Jacob Lewis in 1794, and John Ayers, 1691-1759, donor of the church property in 1731.

The oldest man interred was John McCollum, age 103 in 1760, with Daniel Cooper, second oldest at 100, in 1795, who survived six wives. Oldest women include Sarah Hodge, age 97 in 1849 and Charity Hill, age 94 in 1848.

Caesar Hand, born a slave, 1825-1883, died at age 58, and his tombstone reads "Faithful and Beloved"

Eleanor Boylan, 1749-1795, wife of John B. Boylan, Esq., worked at Lowden's Press in Valley Forge, PA, which printed materials for the Revolutionary Army under George Washington.

Jonathan Whitaker, 1723-1786, appointed Captain of the "Bernards Town" Militia in 1763 by Provincial Governor Josiah Hardy, is interred there.

In a July 4, 1876 centennial address, a noted orator referred to a spot under the oak tree as the final resting place of Betsy Ross, maker of America's first flag. In 1901 Sexton John Craig recalled seeing a tombstone for Betsy Ross but said it had mysteriously disappeared. There are 35 Revolutionary War veterans and those of the country's other wars whose graves are marked with American flags.

Causes of death years ago included childbed fever, consumption, old age, colic and pleurisy. Three unusual deaths were caused by lightning, a falling barn, and being kicked by a horse.

An 1802 burial was that of the 17-year-old son of Francis Peppard, who established the first newspaper in Bernards Township. James McCain,

Presbyterian Churchyard Continued

1733-1797, who built one of the three stone houses in Bernards Township prior to the American Revolution, is at rest there. This property was purchased from the sons of William Penn.

Five generations of the Kirkpatrick family, noted jurists and clergy, are included in addition to three generations of the Vail family, country cousin to the prestigious industrial Morristown family.

The oldest part of the churchyard is called the Old Yard. It was on this land that Native Americans camped; evangelist George Whitefield preached to 3,000 people during the Great Awakening of 1740; George Washington and Lafayette picnicked and colonial troops rested under the shade of the oak tree. Washington established a military hospital a short distance from the tree, in the vicinity of today's North Maple Avenue.

Thanks to George Fricke, historian of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, detailed records of this special churchyard have been meticulously catalogued for research.

From the Friends of the Kennedy-Martin- Stelle Farmstead: Memories of Gerald Pearson By Ann Parsekian

Gerald Pearson, world-renowned physicist who developed the first useful silicon solar cell while working at Bell Labs in Murray Hill, lived with his family at the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead from 1945 to 1960.

Pearson joined Bell Labs in 1929 and was a key participant in the research effort that brought the transistor and related semiconductor devices into being and won a number of international scientific prizes for his work, including the prestigious John Price Wetherill Medal from the Franklin Institute.

Fifty years ago, on April 25 1954, Pearson, Daryl Chapin (another Bernards Township resident) and Calvin Fuller presented to the world the first solar cell that could generate useful power. By the 1960's the solar cell - or "photovoltaics" - had become critically important in the space program, and almost every satellite ever launched has been powered by photovoltaics.

In 1960 Pearson left Bell Labs - and Bernards Township - to teach at Stanford University where he had received his master's degree in 1929. As a professor at Stanford, he produced thirty Ph.D. graduates and set up one of the first university programs in the area of compound semiconductors. By 1981, when he was awarded the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Prize for Energy Research, he had been granted 32 U.S. patents for semiconductors.

Recently, his daughter, Carol Pearson Parlette, shared some memories of her father and their life at the farmstead in Bernards Township:

"One of my most memorable memories of my Dad was the large garden that he so lovingly worked on outside of the house. It was just outside my window in between the house and the large barn. My father grew up on a farm in Oregon. His way to unwind after a busy day at the office was to get out in the garden and work the soil. We always had the most wonderful and delicious vegetables in the summer because of all the work he did in his garden. We also had blackberries and raspberries that he grew behind the house.

"Another memory that I have of my Dad is watching him remodel the house. He worked for months on the kitchen. He was excellent with remodeling and he was always doing something to the house to improve it. He put knotty pine paneling in the den. He and his brother painted the outside of the house every few years. It always looked spectacular to me. White clapboard and green shutters. What a lovely home to grow up in."

Longtime Bernards Township resident Alex Bedrosian was a friend of the Pearsons and was a frequent visitor to the farmstead. He remembers Pearson had a good sense of humor and was "a practical joker of the first order! He would pull your leg and you would hardly know it was happening. I recall his taking me out to the cowshed and asking me if I had ever milked a cow. He insisted that I actually do the milking, and, when I leaned over to get a closer look at the process, he squirted me full in the face!!

"Another time, he encouraged me to ride one of the two horses they kept in the barn; I would be on one and daughter Carol on the other watching intently. When he helped me up, he slapped the side of the

Memories of Gerald Pearson Continued

horse and it bolted. While I hung on for dear life, Carol, an accomplished rider, sped after and reined my horse and its ashen-faced rider somewhere near where the evergreens were planted near the Passaic River south of the current Farmhouse.”

Bedrosian recalls meeting Nobel Prize winners at the Pearson home, including William Schockley, John Bardeen and Walter Brattain. “These were the eminent men of science, and the forerunners to the solar battery, solar cells, transistors, and countless other achievements.”

Pearson also played matchmaker when he introduced young Alex to Sally Dearborn of Bernardsville. Carol Pearson was a bridesmaid at their wedding in Basking Ridge.

Mr. Pearson died in 1987 at the age of 82. His daughter lives in Illinois and writes, “My mother and dad would be so proud and pleased to know what the plans are for their beloved homestead. I follow with interest all the progress that you are making. Thank you for including me in just a small part of the work on the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead. I am completely behind it.”

Hardware Stores of Peapack and Gladstone By Ruth Thomson

Remember the old quotation: “For want of a nail the kingdom was lost”?

In Peapack and Gladstone many of us know the need and want of a nail or certain kind of screw or a few pieces of fine sandpaper. Years ago this need could be solved at one of our two hardware stores – and for a short time – a third small one in upper Gladstone – but now we have to drive at least seven miles north or west to a hardware store in Chester or Bernardsville to fulfill “the want of a nail”.

G. F. Hill and Co and Ellis Tiger Co. were two very unique hardware stores for many years. They were across the street from each other but this didn’t matter. There were plenty of customers for both and if you couldn’t find what you wanted or needed at one store you could probably find it across the street at the other store. Now, many of us wish these stores were still here!

Lots of people still say they miss the smell and look and “how can we help you” of the American

hardware store that was located in their own hometown.

My father, Garner F. Hill opened his hardware store in the early 1900’s across the little dirt road from his feed mill and adjacent to his lumber yard, little garage and farm machinery building so you could buy most of the things you needed for your little or big farm or home. You could also purchase a Chevrolet truck or car.

Mr. Tiger and family, across the street sold lots of clay pipes or fencing or a Desoto, or a Plymouth (after they stopped selling Model T. Fords). As all the Tiger family were involved in the business you paid for your purchases to the member who owned that part of the business. One daughter, Anna Tiger Smith, sold miniature porcelain horses, dogs, and cats neatly lined up in a locked glass case. You had to look long and hard to decide which one to buy!

Over at the Hill store you could look in a glass case and pick out a special fountain pen you wanted or an alarm clock or a special candy bar you liked. In the evening your father could come in to buy his cigar and “light up” and “shoot the breeze” for a couple of hours with friends as there was no TV to “take up the time”.

You could pick out your choice of paint color from a chart and the well experienced clerk could mix it for you and shake the can well so it was ready to use when you got home – along with any size paint brush.

If you needed a new piece of glass for a broken window, the clerk could cut it for you in the basement of the store where shovels, rakes, brooms, and “apple pickers” were lined up. Also, there were wood cabinets with lots of small drawers full of hinges, bolts, screws, or nails of all sizes. In the spring, lawn mowers were put outside during the day and wheeled in at “closing time”. In the “backroom” there was a tall ladder on wheels that could be moved as needed to reach articles on the top shelves.

You could even buy a new pair of “overalls”, a leash for your dog or a blanket for your horse or a ring for the nose of your hog, or even new batteries for your flashlight or a supply of light bulbs.

One of my chores as a young person was to collect any pencils in our home that were blunt, take them

Hardware Stores Continued

“over to my Dad’s store” and sharpen them on the pencil sharpener which was mounted on the windowsill.

I have lots of wonderful memories of growing up in a small town and close to my Dad’s business. I am grateful to have the little red scale that was used in the store for many years to weigh seeds.

English Family Farm Recipient Of Cultural/Heritage Award

The English Family Farm in Liberty Corner was honored at the 11th Annual Awards of the Cultural and Heritage Commission of Somerset County at the May 17 ceremonies in the Old Court House, Somerville. The award for Continuing Use refers to the continuous operation of the property since 1740, more than two and a half centuries ago, by eight generations of family. The farm is outstanding because the farmhouse, accessory buildings and acreage (meadows and woods) remain almost intact from their late 19th Century appearance, well documented in historic photographs.

Part of the original farmhouse dates back to the 1720s. A major Gothic Revival addition was added in the 1860s, the lumber used was from the family’s woods. The farm produces beef cattle, pork, hay, eggs and vegetables. Its location is Valley Road with another important parcel directly east across Valley Road that contains 11 acres of grazing meadow through which runs Harrisons Brook.

It was on this farm that the French Army of Comte Jean Baptiste de Rochambeau encamped overnight in August, 1781, en route to Yorktown and the surrender of British General Charles Cornwallis.

Buildings include a frame barn complex (carriage shed and carriage barn), privy, two large two-story barns, corncrib, two chicken coops, pigpen and icehouse. There are farm vehicles, 150 chickens, 10 cows, produce stand and a resident farmer.

Jacob Castner settled in Annin’s Corner (later called Liberty Corner) and built the first house on the farm. His son, Peter, fought in the Revolutionary War. Nicholas C. Jobs, a teacher, married into the family, and as a church trustee, arranged for Rev. James English (called the Old Dominie) to serve as first pastor of the Liberty

Corner Presbyterian Church. The English farmhouse was the first manse, 1837-1873.

Grandsons Nicholas and Woodruff English owned and operated the farm until the early 1980s when W..J. English took over ownership. His five adult children are the current owners of the farm. Mr. Woodruff English recalled helping take milk cans in the horse drawn wagon from his father’s dairy farm to where the milk was pasteurized, bottled and sent by train to Newark and New York. The property is one of the few working farms remaining in Bernards Township.

In December, 2003, the Township recognized the importance of the site by placing an historic marker in front of the farmhouse, the heading which reads “French Encampment 1781”. The property is in the Liberty Corner Historic District, which was entered in the NJ State Register of Historic Places and the National Register in 1991.

First Historic Preservation Awards Announced

On May 20, The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) honored five historic preservation projects in Bernards Township.

In the categories of restoration and adaptive use, Robert and Holly Cramer meticulously restored the exterior of an 1871 carriage house at 150 Madisonville Road that once appeared to be almost beyond hope and is now a charming home.

The Wealth Strategies building on South Finley Avenue was recognized for the design and compatibility of a large addition at the rear of the original 1882 structure. Essential additional space was acquired without dramatically altering or detracting from the street view of this familiar village building, also known as the Scheurman building.

In Liberty Corner, the English Farm on Valley Road is an outstanding example of preservation. The farmhouse, accessory buildings, and acreage have remained largely intact since the nineteenth century. The property has been in the same family and actively farmed for over 200 years (see previous article for more detail). It is rare and significant that this working farm has been able to incorporate historic outbuildings into its operation.

Historic Preservation Awards Continued

Also in Liberty Corner, the Summer Camp Buildings at the Fellowship Deaconry were recognized for preservation and adaptive use. Originally constructed during World War I as army barracks, these buildings were moved to the Fellowship Deaconry property for use in the summer camp program. Several years ago the sizable buildings were moved again, to another location on the Fellowship Deaconry property where they continue to be used by hundreds of day campers each summer. Moving a building, once a very common occurrence, is still an option that can be used to save historic resources.

Finally, the Grain House Restaurant on Morristown Road is being recognized for the continuing and careful maintenance to preserve the historic appearance of this local landmark. The former flour storage barn, which was constructed in 1769, was moved across the road to its current location in the 1930's when it was converted into a restaurant.

The awards were selected by THSSH's Historic Preservation Committee, which was created in 2003 to carry out informational and educational efforts to promote historic preservation in the Somerset Hills. The Committee hopes to actively involve residents in preserving historic buildings and enhancing neighborhood character, and to collaborate with existing local preservation commissions in Bedminster, Bernardsville, and Peapack-Gladstone. (Bernards Township does not currently have a preservation commission.)

Kennedy Farmstead Fundraiser Announced

The Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Steele (KMS) Farmstead have worked with local artists to create a series of three limited edition *giclee* prints from original watercolors of scenes at the Farmstead.

Paintings by Linda Arnold, Annette Novoa, and Frank Pietrucha have been reproduced in highest-quality prints that will be signed and numbered by the artist.

Frank Pietrucha was particularly inspired by the historic barn: "Being an artist, history buff, and the son of a builder, I was in awe as I entered the English Barn five years ago. Here before my eyes was this structure, a fully timbered barn with mortise and tenon joints secured by pegs and made entirely of wood."

The fundraiser was proposed by Annette Novoa who said, "It's a wonderful opportunity for those who would like a way to support the efforts of the Friends of the Farmstead while also purchasing a beautiful limited edition print."

Samples of these beautiful prints can be seen at the Brick Academy. Each print is priced at \$95.00, with all proceeds going to the Friends of the KMS Farmstead. For more information, please call Ann Parsekian at (908) 766-6103 or Annette Novoa at (908) 719-4785.

Third Floor Update

In April, historical society member Karen White submitted a grant application to Somerset County for funds to restore the third floor of the Brick Academy. Awards will be announced this summer.

The plan approved by the Board of Trustees is to restore the third floor to its circa 1900 appearance and create a schoolroom museum. Later partitions, ceilings and flooring will be removed and one large room similar in size to the main floor will be created. The cloakroom at the top of the stairs and the small room with the historic carved graffiti will be restored.

The year 1900 was chosen because substantial documentation of the appearance of the building exists as well as records of subjects, teachers, students, and school materials. The Brick Academy was abandoned as a public school in 1903 when the Maple Avenue School was built. That school was demolished to build the current Bernards Township library.

If the grant application is successful, restoration work can begin later this year and continue during 2005.

Karen, who was previously curator for the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich in Connecticut, next plans to study the existing school materials, including records of the Board of Education, photographs, and local memoirs. From this information she hopes to be able to determine how the schoolroom was furnished and what education materials were in use.

Karen's efforts are greatly appreciated, especially since she is currently expecting twins! Sincere thanks also go to Dan Lincoln, Richard Macksoud,

Third Floor Update Continued

and John Parsekian for their help in preparing the grant application.

An Indian Legacy of Names

The Lenni-Lenape Indians, early inhabitants of the Somerset Hills area, were a branch of the Delawares, part of the great family of Algonquian branch. The last remaining Lenni-Lenape Native Americans lived in the Peapack area, and in 1832 accepted \$2,000 to relinquish all hunting and fishing rights in Somerset County. There is an Indian burial ground on the east side of Childs Road, Bernardsville, along the stream called Indian Graves Brook. Madisonville Road and the former AT&T site, Basking Ridge were inhabited by Lenni-Lenapes.

Names of Native American Indian origin in and around Somerset and Morris Counties include: Peapack; Passaic; Raritan; Neshanic; Pluckemin; Parsippany; Whippany; Piscataway; Lamington; Succasunna; and, Watchung. Other New Jersey names of Native American origin include: Hackensack; Secaucus; Ho-Ho-Kus; Moonachie; and, Pascack.

Some Facts About the Brick Academy Bell

Although this bell has been in storage upstairs at the Brick Academy for several years, what does anyone know about the old school bell? This sand-molded iron bell hung from the steeple of the Academy (the steeple no longer exists). The bell was made in the 1840s in New York State and measures 18 inches high and two feet in diameter at its lip.

Joseph Dobbs of Bernardsville constructed the wooden cradle, at the request of the Bernards Township Committee in the 1950s. It was the concern of the governing body that the bell be rung to warn the citizens of any emergency, e.g., an air raid, should the power to municipal sirens fail. The cradle would have supported the bell when placed on the village green.

This bell was moved in July, 1975 when the municipal government relocated to its new quarters on Collyer Lane. It was then placed in the attic of the new Town Hall. It was later discovered and returned to the Brick Academy in 1990.

Lewis & Clark: The National Bicentennial Exhibition'

From November 6, 2004 to March 20, 2005, this exhibit will make the first of just two stops on the East Coast at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, PA. The exhibit features hundreds of artifacts including rare and priceless objects and documents that have not been seen in one place since the U.S. Army's Corps of Discovery returned to St. Louis in 1806, after two years of exploration. Period objects and artworks will represent the equipment the explorers used, the landscapes they saw, and the Native American tribes they met. The exhibition will compare the assumptions of Lewis and Clark and the Native Americans they were among on such topics as politics and diplomacy, gender, geography, animals, landscape, clothing, trade and property, healing and health, and plants. These cultural contracts reveal how the expedition overcame barriers to communication or failed to overcome them.

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is published three times per year by
The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills,
P. O. Box 136, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

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