



Inside the Brick Academy

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

May, 2005

Francis Bernard, A Compassionate Governor: History Of Royal Charter Is Explained

By June O. Kennedy

BERNARDS TWP.--Why are we celebrating Charter Day, and who was Governor Francis Bernard? Meet Sir Francis Bernard, 1712-1779, New Jersey's fifth provincial governor, for whom an entire township and its neighbor, Bernardsville, were named. Although he served just two years, 1758-1760, Bernard was the only New Jersey governor in nearly three centuries to show concern for the relationship between native North Americans and Euro-Americans. He proved to be an efficient and considerate administrator, avoiding partisanship and entanglement in local politics.

Bernard was a 45-year-old English barrister when he arrived at Perth Amboy with his family in 1758, and found a colony under pressure from the royal government and other colonies to contribute increasingly to the war against the French. New Jersey also had suffered from a rash of Indian raids in the Minisink frontier and upper Delaware Rivers, resulting in two dozen casualties. He suggested increasing frontier duty with militia on a rotating basis from different counties, since no group would serve long during the harvest.

Bernard organized a conference in Burlington and negotiated and completed settlement of Indian treaties. He established the first Indian reservation at Brotherton (later called Indian Mills) with a provincially controlled trading post in northeast New Jersey, understanding the best defense to be

peace founded on an informed Indian policy to resolve disputes.

Possibly because of his diplomacy in dealing with the Indians, King George II of England issued a Royal Charter May 24, 1760, creating Bernardston Township in honor of Sir Francis Bernard. In 1760, the royal governor left New Jersey with his wife and ten children for a more remunerative position as Governor of Massachusetts. He was remembered as a skillful and energetic governor who managed the New Jersey colony's problems effectively but he was an unpopular governor of Massachusetts, during the turbulent years of the Sugar Act and Stamp Act, prior to the American Revolution. Son of an English minister and Oxford-educated, Bernard was born and died in England. The town of Bernardston, Massachusetts was named for him.

There are four streets in the Township named in honor of the Royal Governor of New Jersey. They are: Governor Drive and Bernard Drive; Charter Court for the charter creating Bernardston Township in his honor; and Yorkshire Court, named for the family seat in England of Sir Francis Bernard.

His successor in New Jersey was Sir Thomas Boone, ancestor of frontiersman Daniel Boone and the entertainer, Pat Boone. The township of Boonton was named for Sir Thomas Boone (Boonetown originally).

New Monument Is Dedicated Honoring Reverend Kennedy

A new pink granite monument for the Rev. Samuel Kennedy, fourth pastor of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, was dedicated in the Basking Ridge Presbyterian churchyard on April 3, following church services.

Rev. Kennedy served as pastor from 1751-1787 and was a person of many talents, for he was not only the minister but also practiced medicine and at the same time founded and actively taught in his own classical school, which was the Basking Ridge Classical School. His "plantation" was a 300-acre farm along the Passaic River about four miles from the "meeting house".

The stone, purchased from the North Barre Granite Company of North Barre, Vermont, is 45 inches high and 24 inches wide, and replaced the original 1787 marker which had deteriorated beyond repair, a victim of acid rain.

The monument has an 18th Century stylized winged angel at the top. The epitaph on the tombstone reads:

***In memory of the
Rev'd Samuel Kennedy who died August the
31st
A.D.1787 in the 67th year of his age
God's holy law thy mouth proclaimed,
Pure Gospel flowed through every vein,
To dying men thy lips proclaimed
The glory of thy Savior's name.
Sleep then beneath this earthly clod,
Thy flesh shall see its Savior-God,
Till the bright morning shall appear,
And thou thy Savior's image bear.***

Save Ellis Island

by Ruth Hill Thomson

There is a two-story building on the quiet Main Street in Gladstone that has only a small metal plaque identifying its address: 268 Main Street. The building houses the offices of Save Ellis Island, Inc., an organization founded in 1999 by Christine

Todd Whitman, former New Jersey governor, who appointed Finn M.W. Caspersen as founding

Chairman. In these offices are several employees who are dedicated to the goals of Save Ellis Island: to raise public awareness of the importance of preserving and utilizing Ellis Island in its entirety; to develop a reuse plan that honors Ellis Island and recognizes its history and its visitors' experience; to raise funds to continue the restoration of the thirty buildings; and, to develop and implement programs that complement the restoration and reuse as well as the existing museum programming.

Quoting from a recent brochure from Save Ellis Island:

“Between 1892 and 1954 more than 12 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island after having sailed past the Statue of Liberty, which welcomed them with her upraised torch and her invitation to the world's ‘huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.’ Nearly 80 percent of these immigrants made an uneventful passage through the immigration process and left Ellis Island to begin new lives in America - part of the great immigrant tide that made such a profound impact on our nation's character. The remaining 20 percent were detained on Ellis Island for legal or health reasons, prior to admittance. Those who required medical attention received high-quality care in Ellis Island's hospital complex; 99 percent of those treated were cured and allowed to enter the United States to begin their healthy new lives. Today an estimated 40 percent of Americans can trace at least one ancestor's entry into the United States through Ellis Island.”

Helping to restore Ellis Island is an opportunity to preserve the past, honor the present and build the future heritage and history of America. Save Ellis Island, Inc. is a national non-profit organization working in partnership with the National Park Service to raise the capital needed to rehabilitate, restore and put to beneficial reuse the thirty currently deteriorated and unused buildings of Ellis Island, located primarily on its South Side.

Save Ellis Island plans to implement a national awareness campaign to highlight the necessity for and national importance of restoring Ellis Island in

its entirety for all Americans and the millions who visit each year.

Save Ellis Island (Continued)

A map and description of the area and buildings entrusted to the Save Ellis Island Inc. effort can be found on its website at www.saveellisland.org or contact the organization at (908) 781-9900.

The Jacobus Vanderveer House in Bedminster

By Stephen Maynard

During the American Revolution, the Somerset Hills were home to much of the Continental Army. In Bedminster, where part of The Hills community now stands, General Henry Knox created an artillery training school that would be the forerunner of the Academy at West Point. Knox was a trusted advisor to George Washington and later became the Secretary of War.

Fast forward to the 1970s, when the non-profit Pluckemin Archaeological Project started a "dig" in Bedminster. Thousands of artifacts-military and personal-were recovered from the dig and will eventually be on display in the recently restored Jacobus Vanderveer House. The house, which served as the temporary home of General Knox and his family during the winter of 1778-'79, was purchased by Bedminster Township in 1989 and is now listed on the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places.

The Vanderveer house is architecturally significant because much of its interior remains as it was during the late 1700s and early 1800s. It has been restored to display sections from its original construction through to its 1813 appearance, when the house reached its architectural zenith.

A group of volunteers, The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House, is establishing a museum for exhibiting artifacts from the dig and is developing interpretative exhibits for children and adults, all related to the history of the Revolution.

The Jacobus Vanderveer House is located on Route 202/206 South in Bedminster and is open to the public for personal and group tours by appointment

only. For more information, visit www.jvanderveerhouse.com. To make a tour

appointment, call 908-234-0333, extension 411, or send email to info@jvanderveerhouse.com.

Janet Foster to be Featured Speaker at 2005 Historic Preservation Awards

The 2005 Historic Preservation Awards will be presented on Thursday, May 19, at 7:30 p.m. at the Brick Academy. Last year's event, with a fascinating talk by George Fricke, attracted a capacity crowd. This year the Historic Preservation Committee is pleased to announce that the always delightful Janet Foster of Madison will give a talk on local architecture after the award presentations. Janet has her own consulting firm, Acroterion, and is an instructor in the Historic Preservation Certificate Program at Drew University as well as being director of the Historic Preservation Program at Columbia University. Janet has also published two books about New Jersey architecture, [Building by the Book: Pattern-Book Architecture in New Jersey](#), and [Legacy Through the Lens: A Study of Mendham Architecture](#).

Old House Owners: Did You Know?

In an effort to aid low and moderate income homeowners, Bernards Township has developed a program designed to provide financial assistance to residents so they can make general property improvements to their principal place of residence. For more information about the Bernards Township Housing Rehabilitation Program, contact the Bernards Township Housing Administrator at 908-204-3019 or 908-204-3016.

New Jersey has the first building code in the nation written specifically for existing buildings. Its provisions focus on work in existing structures (not necessarily historic). Since its enactment the Rehab Subcode has made the reuse of buildings safer, cheaper and easier and has encouraged the preservation of New Jersey's historic buildings. The Rehab Subcode is intended to make sure buildings built to this code are safe, yet can be rehabilitated in a reasonable and fair manner. The code does not require that work done to an existing building meet the same codes as a newly constructed building.

None of the changes in the code compromises safety, yet rehabilitation can be more affordable.

Old House Owners (Continued)

All code inspectors have been trained in the new code. For more information about the Rehab Subcode, contact Dennis Bettler at 908-204-3030.

For over 25 years, Technical Preservation Services, part of the National Park Service, has helped homeowners, preservation professionals, organizations, and government agencies by publishing easy-to read guidance on preserving, rehabilitating and restoring historic buildings. More than 2 million copies of the *Preservation Briefs* are in print and the illustrated *Preservation Briefs* 1-42 are now available online. A complete set of the *Briefs* is at the Brick Academy, or find them all online at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm.

History Resources on the Internet

H-New Jersey is an Internet discussion group sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Commission as a service to the state's history community. The subject of this H-Net discussion group is everything concerned with the study of New Jersey history. H-New-Jersey is open to anyone with an interest in the subject, including but not limited to academic researchers, teachers, students, archivists, historic site staff, volunteers, genealogists, archaeologists, historic preservationists, and just plain history buffs. Subscription is free, and you can unsubscribe at any time. Go to www.h-net.org/~njersey/

Bernards Township has put the complete list of Historically Significant Homes in Bernards Township on line at the township website. There's a brief description of each building and the list is searchable by block and lot, age, or street. View it at www.bernards.org/historicalhomepublic/hhomes.aspx

The Library of Congress has an enormous collection of history resources online at their American Memory site, including vast numbers of maps, photographs, and manuscripts. Visit the website at memory.loc.gov/ammem/

Brick Academy News: New Exhibit Planned

The restoration of the third floor will be getting underway soon, using grant funds from Somerset County. It is anticipated that the Research Center and the main museum floor will continue to be open during regularly scheduled hours. As a result of the restoration project, an unusual new museum exhibit is being planned. Sometimes the safest storage for framed work is on the wall, and soon Brick Academy visitors will have an opportunity to see rarely viewed items that have been stored until now on the third floor. Watch for more news about this exciting exhibit!

THSSH Donates Vintage Student Chairs To Local Schools, Etc.

By June O. Kennedy

In the early 20th Century, oak two and three-seater connected chairs graced the Assembly Room of the Maple Avenue School in Basking Ridge. When the building was no longer in use, these chairs were moved into the Brick Academy, which served as the Municipal Building until 1975. (The school was demolished in 1973 to provide land for the present Bernards Township Library.)

These chairs provided seating for the public at Township Committee meetings, local governmental agencies and Municipal Court sessions. Eventually, the chairs were moved to the Academy's top floor and the Basking Ridge Historical Society, today's Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, replaced them with Windsor chairs.

In recent years, the dual and triple-seaters have been seen at the Bernards Municipal Building, Engineering Office, Library and Board of Health. The remaining chairs were donated in February to the Library, and Oak Street, Cedar Hill, Liberty Corner and Mount Prospect Schools. All chairs have a brass plaque on them, which reads, "Maple Avenue School, Basking Ridge, 1903-1973." Below is a thank-you note from one of the recipients; sent to The Historical Society:

"On behalf of. the administration, staff, students

and parents of Mount Prospect School, I would like to thank you for the gift of the chair from the Maple Avenue School. Since the chair has been

THSSH Donates Chairs (Continued)

"displayed in the main office of our school, it immediately became the focal point of the room. Not only have the staff members taken note of the chair, but so have the parents and students. We in the office enjoy sharing your story of the chair's history with anyone who asks."

"We appreciate this gift and welcome the members of The Historical Society to visit Mount Prospect School to view this piece of Bernards Township history in its new home."

(Signed) Judith R. Slutzky,
Principal, Mount Prospect
School

Bernards Had 10-Day Celebration In 1960 For Its 200th Anniversary

By June O. Kennedy

Who can remember the ten-day celebration of Bernards Township's 200th anniversary in 1960?

Researching files in the Brick Academy, newspapers reported activities from Saturday, May 21 through Monday, May 30. Events included two official flag raisings in Basking Ridge and Liberty Corner, of the newly designed municipal flag designed by James Fogelman; a grand parade featuring 19 floats and fire apparatus companies, four bands and 700 marchers from local organizations. There was a thanksgiving worship service, antique show, museum display and historical fashion show, soapbox derby, picnic, band concert, outdoor folk and modern dancing, and Memorial Day services. The Village Players presented an historic tableaux, "Polly Kinnan and the Indians". Released were 350 helium-filled balloons containing gift certificates to local stores.

Memorabilia available included Bicentennial history books, maps with colorful legends, tri-corner hats, and wooden nickels. The Bernards Township municipal emblem was on beverage coasters and napkins, ashtrays, barbecue aprons and commemorative bottles.

A telegram from then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower was read at opening ceremonies. In 1960, Bernards Township's 200th Anniversary of

the granting of its charter on May 24, 1760 was a memorable event!

Poet laureate publishes Second book of verse

Norman R. Nelsen, Bernards Township's first Poet Laureate, has published his second book of poetry, Basking Ridge...and Beyond. The work, in a limited edition of 500 copies, contains poems about local people, events, buildings, organizations, historic places, the environment and also Nelsen's friends and travels.

A resident of the Township for 18 years, Nelsen has lived at Ridge Oak for six years. Included in the newest book of poetry are several poems from the last decade, in addition to a complete body of new work. His previous book was titled A Year Here in Basking Ridge that was published in 1997.

There's A Liberty Corner Now Located In Ireland!

The *Irish Times* newspaper recently reported a newly-developed Liberty Corner building, which is viewed as vital to the rejuvenation of Dublin. The structure has opened its doors to the public and is described as "a gleaming municipal development, comprising of a five-storey arts centre and four-storey dance centre."

There will be vital rehearsal space to theater companies. Construction consists of floor to ceiling windows, double height room space and glass balconies. Financing was from the local Arts Council and Department of Arts, Sports and Culture.

The area around Liberty Corner was known at the start of the 20th Century as the red light district of Monto, which was referred to in James Joyce's "Ulysses". Now the corner bordered by narrow cobbled streets and the adjoining park has been reclaimed, and it lends the area an Old World feeling.

Sun Catchers For Sale

Do you know what they are? They are glass plaques that are hung in windows with various designs on them.

The Historical Society is now offering sun catchers for sale displaying the Basking Ridge Oak Tree hand painted on each. The price for one of these attractive sun catchers is \$45.00. They are available for purchase Sunday afternoons at the Brick Academy between 2 and 4 o'clock, or you may call June Campbell at (908) 647-2241.

About Jockey Hollow, Morristown

Actually named Jockey's Hollow, this area was where jockeys tested their racing horses! In 1779-1780, there were 10,000 troops who built 1,200 log cabins on 900 acres. When the men were at Jockey Hollow, the nearest tavern (for news, a warm bed, good food, drink, etc.) was the Vealtown Tavern, known as John Parker's Tavern, and known today as the former Bernardsville Library building, in Bernardsville. The colonial troops cut a footpath through the mountains. That is why the road is called Old Army Road in Bernardsville and also in Bernards Township!

Notable Dates In History March

- 1st President John F. Kennedy creates the Peace Corps, 1961
- 1st Lindbergh baby kidnapping, 1932
- 3rd First postage stamps authorized, 1847--5¢ Franklin and 10¢ Washington
- 3rd "Star Spangled Banner" made U.S. national anthem, Veterans of Foreign Wars initiated, 1931
- 6th Fall of the Alamo, Texas, 1836
- 7th Alexander Graham Bell patented first telephone, 1876

12th Great Blizzard of 1888

15th American Legion founded in Paris by veterans of American Expeditionary Force, 1919

14th Congress makes gold the standard for U.S. currency, encouraged by the Klondike gold strikes, 1900

16th West Point Academy founded, 1802

23rd Voting age lowered to 18 years by Congress, 1971

29th Last American combat troops leave South Vietnam, 1973

30th U.S. purchases Alaska from Russia for \$7,200,000, 1867 (2¢ per acre)

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