



# *Inside the Brick Academy*

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

October, 2004

## **New Grants Issued**

Two new grants were issued at the September Freeholder's meeting. A \$70,000 grant was approved for The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) renovation of the third floor in the Brick Academy. A \$110,000 grant was approved for the continued restoration of the Kennedy Farmstead.

## **John Stelle's 1847 Diary**

**By Ann Parsekian**

In July, the historical society was given a group of Stelle Family archive materials that document some of the history of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead. One of the most fascinating items is a diary from 1847 that was written by John Stelle - the brother of Clarkson Stelle who owned the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead from 1832 to his death in 1850. John Stelle owned the large farmstead on the opposite side of King George Road.

Miss Beatrice Stelle, a great-great granddaughter of John Stelle who lives in Williamsport, PA, donated the materials which also include a 200-year old family bible, early deeds, an 1832 will, and several early photographs, all of which will eventually be displayed at the Brick Academy.

The diary offers a fascinating glimpse into life in Bernards Township as it was over 150 years ago, through the eyes of a local farmer writing in the first person. John Stelle, 57 years old when he wrote the diary, was a busy and prosperous farmer. His entries always contain observations about the weather and the conditions it created, from bad, muddy roads, to fine weather for sleighing, to water

in his cellar. He sees numerous neighbors and friends, and travels around the countryside to a variety of destinations related to his farm business - many of the names and places will be familiar.

Stelle's work was literally never done. During the winter of 1847 - no matter what the weather - he made repeated trips to Peapack for lime, to an unidentified mountain for fence rails and wood, to nearby towns to sell his farm products. He and his sons sowed their fields, endlessly threshed the previous year's crops, repaired equipment and looked after the work animals; and he carefully recorded amounts and prices of all his farm products. He took every Sunday off, usually attending church at Mt. Bethel Baptist Church, and frequently socializing in the afternoon.

The entire diary is being transcribed, and the full transcription for each month (January through March so far) will be available online at the KMS Farmstead website: <http://www.b-k-ind.com/barn/> A printed copy of the transcription is also available at the Brick Academy. The following excerpts from January have been edited to add punctuation, but the original grammar and spelling have been retained. Clarifications and illegible words are marked in [brackets].

Friday, January 1: I wish you a happy New Year. Its warm and foggy. Has not froose [froze] abit last night. Wind in the South. We sawed the big maple tree Down - Jacob [his son] Came from the Comptons and the mud Deep. Frost all dirt. Clear all Day -

Tuesday, 5: It Rained till 4 Oc this morning and the wind Blew very hard. It Cleared of at 5 Oc. Not Cold. Water quite high. We finish Cutting the Big mapel tree. Jacob went to John Worth for the girls.

## 1847 Diary (Continued)

It has been very Clear all Day and pleasant. I sod [sowed] som Salet [lettuce] and Redish to Day –  
Saturday, 9: Clear and Cold. The thermometry Stood at 14. Jacob and Clarkson went to Plainfield. We thrash ry[e] and finish the ry. I went to bring Margret Thompson home. The water and ice was so high we Could not Cross. I took her up to James Vails.

Tuesday, 12: Wind west and Cold. Thermom 13. Its quite Clear and fine winter weather. I went to Feltville with two Sheep. They weyed 88 lb at [illegible] \$4.40. I was Back home at 3 Oc. Jacob went to Long hill. Its first Reight [rate] Sleighing. Freeman [another son] Drawd wood out of the field west of the Farm.

Wednesday, 13: Wind South west and very Cold and Clear. The thermometer Stood this morning at 4 above zero – I went on the Sled to pepack and got 1 load of lime. Freeman went to turkey [New Providence] with ry. Not quite so Cold. Looks like Rain.

Wednesday, 20: Cloudy wind East. It looks like a storm. I went to Feltville and to turkey with Oats. I took 21 bush[els] of Oats to Turkey and 40 to Feltville; 1 hog 1 sheep – quite Cold all Day. Freeman and Jake Drawd in one Stack of Wheat.

Monday, 25: Clear and fine this morning. Ephraim [probably John's older brother] and I went to the mountain and got [fence]Rails. It Clouded up in the After noon and looks like a storm. Freeman went for Lime. Jacob went to Smalleys and their [there] I beleave Staid all Day for he Did not get home til [illegible].

Tuesday, 26: Cloudy wind East and looks like Rain. Ephraim and my Self went to the mountain for Rails. We had Vendue [auction or sale] and Sold 2 lots of Wood. It Rained before we got home – Freeman went for lime – we heard of the Deth of Charles Smaley['s] Child at Mr. Coxes.

Thursday, 28: Wind west and Clear and Cold. Went to the mountains and Freeman went for lime. Jacob went to Plainfields and got his New Harnes. Its Clear and fine weather as ever was. Roads first Rait [rate] – Jacob paid \$28.00 for his harness –

Sunday, 31: Quite Cold but Clear. I went to Thomas Simpson and to Chirch. Jacob and Freeman went Chirch. Fast ice on the [illegible].

## Libraries and Schools of Peapack and Gladstone By Ruth Hill Thomson

The entrance to the Peapack and Gladstone Library is at the end of a long sidewalk, which is parallel to a very old wooden fence. The fence has been there for many years; having been built on a property line. It now is a faded green color full of knotholes, has to be propped up and is missing several sections of the edge.

Libraries and schools seem to go “hand in hand” and hopefully a new library will be built within a year or so on the site of one of the borough's first schools, not far from the present library, which is now a part of the most current public school.

According to handwritten notes of Anne Tiger Smith (Mrs. Oscar Smith), “The first school in Peapack was located on Holland Rd. My father, Ellis Tiger attended the school. His father had to pay for his tuition and books. Later a free public school was built on the corner of Main Street and Branch Road – now Willow Avenue. The land for the school was purchased on December 26, 1834 from Nicholas Jerolaman and conveyed to the Trustees of the Fourth School District of Bedminster Township; A school was built here in 1835 and used until 1885 when the land was sold to Abram Smith on June 3, 1885. The old school was moved up Willow Avenue about 325 feet to land purchased from the David Apgar farm. This old ‘one room’ schoolhouse had a room added for use by the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Later another room was added for the first grade and kindergarten.” This building is the present Kay Memorial Building which was bought in January 1945 from the Junior Order of United American Mechanics when it was disbanded. This building was called the Junior Hall for many years. This building became known as a memorial to Sara Gulick Kay (wife of Dr. Kay), the first president of the Woman's Club and president of the Peapack Gladstone Library Association. A new larger school was built on Main Street on 1907 and a modern addition was built in 1950.

The old original building (Sara Kay Memorial) has seen better days. It is in bad physical shape. The Borough purchased it from the Woman's Club and the plan is to demolish it and build the new Library on the site.

Quoting from “A Journey Through Peapack and Gladstone” by Jacqueline Tutton; “in 1980 after

## **Libraries and Schools (Continued)**

nearly 150 years of continuous public school operations, Peapack-Gladstone's only public school closed its doors, and the Borough became a non-operating school district. For several years the local school board had researched plans for modernization of the elementary school. Several referenda for remodeling and enlarging the school had been rejected by the voters. Declining enrollment and the high cost of renovating an outdated facility were factors cited by the opponents of the referenda. As a result, the Peapack and Gladstone Board of Education entered into an agreement with the Bernardsville Board of Education effective July 1, 1980 under which Bernardsville was to provide education in its facilities for all Peapack and Gladstone public school students. Public high school students from the twin boroughs have attended Bernards High School since 1912 via the Erie Lackawanna Railroad, later on called NJ Transit."

### **October Recalls Return of Heroine Mary Kinnan By June Kennedy**

It was 210 years ago this October that Mary Lewis Kinnan, local heroine, returned to Basking Ridge after three years and five months as a captive of the Shawnee Indians.

Mary Elizabeth Lewis married Joseph Kinnan, a Revolutionary War veteran, in 1779 in Basking Ridge. They later moved to the Tygart Valley in western Virginia with their three children, seeking more farmland.

In 1791 as Mary was preparing dinner for her husband and visiting brother Jacob who had completed a day's work on the farm, Shawnee Indians attacked the cabin. Lewis fled with his two Kinnan nephews; Kinnan was killed instantly as was his young daughter. Mary was taken captive.

The Indians forced her to march with them to Ohio. She was able to send a letter to her brother; however, the courier became ill and his mail pouch was buried for decontamination.

Six months later, the letter was on its way to Basking Ridge where Jacob Lewis read it to the Presbyterian Church congregation, resulting in a generous collection to fund the rescue mission.

Upon reaching Ohio, he found his sister not there but from reports she was in the Detroit area.

Brother and sister found each other and Mary was given men's clothing to escape her captive, traveling by river raft back to Basking Ridge.

Mary Lewis Kinnan returned on October 11, 1794, after 41 months in captivity. Called "Aunt Polly" by the villagers, she observed each anniversary of the tragedy in the woods, mourning the loss of her family. She died at age 85 and her tombstone can be seen from the North Finley side of the Presbyterian churchyard, next to her son, Joseph.

### **Spoon From Pluckemin's Kenilworth Inn Newest Acquisition of Historical Group**

A silver spoon with "Kenilworth Inn, Pluckemin" is the newest acquisition to the Historical Society, donated by Robert Sullivan of the Bernards area who found it in his garden!

The Kenilworth Inn was at the Pluckemin Crossroads on the site of the present A&P shopping center. Built in 1899 by James Brown Jr., the Inn was a 20-bedroom health resort that featured a casino with dance floor, bowling alley, several cottages and a nine hole golf course that was open from mid-May to Nov. 1. There was a combined coachbarn/stable.

An ad offered for \$3 a day: excellent food specialties by season, golf, dancing, and a locale free from malaria. Although gambling was permitted, the hotel was on the temperance plan, with bottled water from Brown's springs served. The liquor ban was lifted in 1904 but the Inn still did not survive.

The building "burned to the ground" on April 25, 1928, causing a loss estimated at \$40,000. The blaze was thought to have been caused by a faulty chimney. Fire companies from Far Hills, Peapack-Gladstone and Somerville devoted their efforts to saving the stable.

The Inn building had formerly housed Troop B., NJ State Police headquarters.

### **Some Past History In The Somerset Hills**

1900 Only two school districts existed. Bernards Township included Far Hills and Bernardsville, and Bedminster included Peapack-Gladstone.

## Past History (Continued)

- 1926 Under the direction of the Somerville and Basking Ridge Garden Clubs, the schoolchildren in the Bernards Township-Bernardsville School District participated in the nation-wide movement of destroying tent caterpillars. The children destroyed 69,610 caterpillar nests. Winning a first prize for killing the most nests was Karl Jerolaman of Bernardsville Elementary School with 11,112.
- 1927 State troopers raided a most-frequented confectionary store in Peapack because of the alleged presence of a gambling slot machine, which school children were in the habit of patronizing. The owner was fined \$50.00.
- 1930 The first patients arrived at the newly completed Veterans Administration Medical Center at Lyons, NJ.
- 1931 The first electrified train came to the area. Its 1,600 daily riders celebrated it.
- 1946 Neill-Card Post 114, American Legion signed a contract with George L. Lee of Bernardsville to buy a 12-acre site with a baseball field on South Maple Avenue in Bernards Township. Later known as the War Memorial Field, it was sold to the Township in June 1978 for \$62,000.
- 1950 Bernardsville Councilman Malcolm Forbes received a gold medal from the General of the Armies, Dwight D. Eisenhower, on behalf of the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge for bringing about a better understanding of the American Way of Life through his then bi-monthly magazine, Nation's Heritage.
- 1951 Walter B. Matheny School of Far Hills purchased the stable group and adjacent cottages of Blairsden, palatial estate of C. L. Blair in Peapack-Gladstone. Purchase by the school engaged in habilitating children with cerebral palsy nearly completed the liquidation of Blairsden's 422 acres and 12 buildings. The main residence occupied by Mr. Blair until his death in 1944 was sold with 50 acres to the Sisters of St. John the Baptist. Three other parcels were sold as new estates and four were sold to adjoining property owners.

1952 Average price of 62 homes sold in the first half of the year by the Somerset Hills Multiple Listing Service was \$21,190. This was an increase from \$17,000 in 1949. But the 62 homes were among 134 listed with an average offering price of \$27,816.

1952 An ordinance creating a police department was unanimously adopted by Far Hills Borough Council. Salary ranges were set at \$2,750 to \$3,750. The new chief was expected to be Fred Koenig Jr. of Prospect Street, the Borough policeman for the last five years.

1976 Employees moved into the new AT&T corporate headquarters building in Basking Ridge.

1977 AT&T opened its Long Lines Department in Bedminster on Routes 202-206.

### **Somerset Hills Residents Prominent In State And National Governments**

With a national Presidential election on November 2, it is an opportune time to recall the many Somerset Hills residents who were active in State and National government from the early days of the United States to the present.

These men and women traveled the roads to Trenton and Washington, D.C., as representatives of their constituents, serving the country's leaders in peacetime and wartime. Some of these distinguished persons were:

#### **NJ Assembly**

John Ewing, Bedminster, 1967-1977; Millicent Fenwick, Bernardsville, 1970-1974; Thomas H. Kean, Bedminster, 1967-1977; H. Rivington Pyne, Bedminster, 1935.

#### **NJ Senate**

Samuel Childs, Bernardsville, 1902-1905; John F. Dryden, Bernardsville, 1901-1907; John Ewing, Bedminster, 1977-1998; Malcolm Forbes, Far Hills, 1950-1956; H. Rivington Pyne, Bedminster, 1941-1947.

#### **NJ Governor**

Thomas H. Kean, Bedminster, 1983-1990; Samuel L. Southard, Bernards Township 1832-1833; Christine Todd Whitman, Far Hills/Oldwick, 1994-2001.

#### **NJ Treasurer**

Archibald Alexander, Bernardsville, 1954-1955.

**Residents Prominent in Government  
(Continued)**

**US House of Representatives**

Elias Boudinot, Bernards Township 1789-1795; Millicent Fenwick, Bernardsville, 1975-1982; James Linn, Bernards Township, 1799-1801; Henry Southard, Bernards Township, 1801-1811 and 1815-1821.

**US Senate**

Nicholas Brady, Bedminster, 1982; William L. Dayton, Bernards Township, 1842-1851; Theodore Freylinghuysen, Bernards Township, 1829-1835; Samuel L. Southard, Bernards Township, 1821-1823 and 1833-1842; Robert F. Stockton, Bernards Township, 1851-1853; Harrison Williams, Bedminster, 1959-1982.

**US Secretary of the Treasury**

Nicholas Brady, Bedminster, 1988-1992; C. Douglas Dillon, Bedminster, 1961-1965

**US Secretary of War**

George B. Post Jr., Bernardsville for President Franklin D. Roosevelt

**US Secretary of State**

Cyrus Vance. Liberty Corner, for President Jimmy Carter.

**US Undersecretary of State**

C. Douglas Dillon, Bedminster, 1959; Sumner Welles, Bernardsville, for President Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Undersecretary of the Army**

Archibald Alexander, Bernardsville, 1950-1952; Assistant Secretary of the Army, 1949

**Vice-Presidential Candidates**

William L. Dayton, Bernards Township, with John C. Fremont, Republicans, 1856; Theodore Freylinghuysen, Bernards Township, with Henry Clay, Whigs, 1843

**Ambassadors to France**

William L. Dayton, Bernards Township, 1861-1864, appointed by President Lincoln; C. Douglas Dillon, Bedminster, 1953-1957, appointed by President Eisenhower

**Secretary to Ambassador in Berlin**

H. Rivington Pyne, Bedminster, 1914-1915

**Political Positions**

Guy George Gabrielson, Bernardsville, Chairman, Republican National Convention that nominated Eisenhower, 1952; Bernard Shanley, Bernardsville, Advisor to President Eisenhower, Deputy Chief of

Staff, Appointments Secretary; Bill Moyers, Bernardsville, Communications Director for President L. B. Johnson, Deputy Director of the Peace Corps., active television commentator

**Historic Somerset Hills**

Bedminster – Chartered by King George II of England on April 4, 1749

Bernards Township – Chartered by King George II of England on May 24, 1760

Bernardsville – Separated from Bernards Township on March 6, 1924

Far Hills Borough – Separated from Bernards Township on April 7, 1921

Peapack-Gladstone – Separated from Bedminster on March 28, 1912

**Girl Scout's Gold Award Project  
Results in Oral History Publication**

Megan P. McNamara of Basking Ridge, a Ridge High School sophomore and Senior Girl Scout, has published an oral history as her project toward a Gold Award. Her book's title is "It Was A Sleepy Little Town, An Oral History of Bernards Township".

The Gold Award Project requires completion of at least 50 hours of service and making a difference within the community in which she lives. Megan created her oral history presentation by interviewing senior citizens who resided in Bernards Township for a long time and who shared their memories with her.

The author, age 15, spent 92 hours on the work, meeting with June Kennedy, Bernards Township Historian, who served as her mentor. Megan interviewed six senior citizens, recorded their conversations, and also selected vintage photographs to illustrate the text. Eighteen copies of the spiral-bound publication were published and given to the local elementary schools and Ridge High School, Bernards Township Library, THSSH, and scouting officials.

In addition, copies were presented to the interviewees: Priscilla Bruno, James DeCoste, Charles Fortenbacker, June Kennedy, Elizabeth King Sisto, and Olga Terry.

A copy of the publication is in THSSH reference center.

## New Acquisitions

THSSH is pleased to announce the following acquisitions for the library at the Brick Academy:

Captain's Dress Uniform (James Sylvester Flynn)  
Basking Ridge Company #1 Vol. Fire Dept. 1936 –  
donated by Betty Ann Ciucevich (daughter)

Book of Accounts of Simeon E. Amerman,  
Bernards Township dated May 13, 1871 – donated  
by Ruth Hill Thomson

*Bedminster Township 250 Years 1749-1999* by  
Prich Mathews

*Jockey Hollow, A Novel of the American Revolution*  
by Boyd Wright

*Somerset County, New Jersey A Tale of Three  
Villages* 1961 Bernardsville, Basking Ridge,  
Mendham 1899 edited by Rev. W. B. Judd

*The Van Dorn Mill* Basking Ridge, N.J. by Fred W.  
Kampmier 3<sup>rd</sup>

*The Strange and Mysterious Past in the Somerset  
Hills Area* by Valerie Barnes

*Old Burial Grounds of New Jersey* by Janice Kohl  
Sarapin

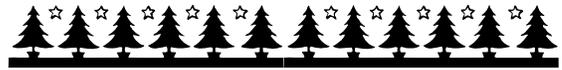
*The Best of Times – Eighty-Two* (B'Ville Year  
Book)

*In The Somerset Hills* Bernardsville, Far Hills,  
Peapack-Gladstone compiled by Jean M. Williams  
– 2 copies

*Among The Blue Hills, Bernardsville – A History*  
Published by Bernardsville History Book  
Committee

### New Walking Tour Booklet

THSSH has just introduced a newly rewritten self-guided walking tour of downtown Basking Ridge, which will be available in October. Trustee Marcella Miccolis, who designed the attractive booklet, researched the buildings and located historic photographs in the historical society's archives. The booklet is free, and will be available at the Brick Academy, BaseCamp Adventure Outfitters, the library, and the municipal building. The walking tour is a project of the Historic Preservation Committee, which has plans to create more self-guided walking and driving tours in the Somerset Hills.



### Reserve the Date: Dec. 16 For THSSH Yule Party

The Society's bi-annual Christmas party, celebrating our historical past with interesting games, music and refreshments will be held on Thursday, December 16 at 7:30 P.M. in the Brick Academy. If planning to attend, bring a "What's It?" and stump the panel of experts.



### Membership Renewal

Envelopes have been mailed for the annual membership renewals. THSSH hopes that all members will renew their memberships by October 31. Those members who are life members are asked to consider a tax-deductible contribution at this time. The ongoing restoration of the Brick Academy is expensive and taxes the resources of THSSH. The Board of Trustees thanks you in advance for your interest.

### *Inside the Brick Academy*

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

Chairman, June Campbell  
President, Daniel Lincoln  
1<sup>st</sup> V.P., Robert Blacklidge  
2<sup>nd</sup> V.P. Diane O'Connor

Membership, Lorraine Passmore  
Secretary, Lawrence Terricone  
Treasurer, Richard Macksoud

Trustees: Joseph Callahan, David  
Connolly, Sylvia Gambony,  
Florence Hallgring, George  
Helmke, June Kennedy,  
Donald Lorenz, Marcella  
Miccolis, Ann Parsekian,  
Ken Salvo, Larry Schwenk,  
Constance Smythe, David  
Stone, Mildred Van Dyke

Newsletter: David Connolly,  
Tom & Karen Fitzsimons

