



Inside the Brick Academy

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

October, 2005

BOUDINOT-SOUTHARD MANSION BOUGHT BY SOMERSET COUNTY

By June O. Kennedy

A \$7 million dollar land purchase by Somerset County involving an historic three-story mansion and its 61 surrounding acres in Bernards Township occurred in late May 2005, and has been applauded and approved by local and County officials.

The Elias Boudinot-Henry Southard Mansion on North Maple Avenue, Basking Ridge, owned by Boudinot from 1771-1785 and then his neighbor, Southard, has a formidable history. Initially a modest farmhouse and enlarged to its current size in 1940, the structure was visited several times by Martha Washington during the American Revolution and housed the Boudinot family. Elias Boudinot was elected president of the first Continental Congress in 1771.

Other political notables included Representative Henry Southard, whose son, Samuel Lewis Southard, was born in the house in 1787. Samuel would later become a U.S. Senator, New Jersey Governor, Secretary of the Navy, President Pro-Tem of the Senate under President John Tyler, and Chief Justice of the N.J. Supreme Court. He and his father were the first father-son combination in Congress, and co-sponsored the Missouri Compromise Bill.

Bernards Township officials noted the valuable location of the open space property, close to the Great Swamp, the County's 925-acre Lord Stirling Park, the Township's Southard Park and the Basking Ridge Country Club.

The property's most recent owners were the Ross family. The last owner, Edmund B. Ross, died in

January 2005, his wife, Margaret Haskell Ross died in 1999. Their heirs are four surviving adult children.

Boudinot moved his family from Elizabeth to escape the threat of the British, according to historical reports. While a resident here, he was a delegate to the Provincial Congress and aide-de-camp to Lord Stirling. He also traveled to Valley Forge with George Washington as Commissary of Prisoners. He was elected president of the Continental Congress in November, 1782, served for one year, signing the peace treaty that ended the Revolutionary War September 3, 1783.

A recent research paper has revealed Boudinot left Congress for several weeks in 1781, returning to Basking Ridge in time to see the French Army's departure for Yorktown. French troops had encamped overnight in Liberty Corner on the English Farm property.

An Historic Building in Gladstone

By Ruth Thomson

If you walk a little south of the "Save Ellis Island" building in Gladstone you will see an historic building. As of now it is empty with no identifying sign but the "For Sale" sign is gone and it is rumored it has been sold and will reopen as a family restaurant.

Originally it was the Andrew Rarick farmhouse, which dates about 1840. It was acquired by the Vliet family in the 1930's and named "The Gladstone Hotel." Back then towns were required to construct taverns that could offer food, drink, and lodging to passers-by. A mile

A Historic Building (Cont'd)

down the Maine Street there was also Peapack Hotel, which was demolished in 1975.

Other owners of the Gladstone Hotel have been the Elks Club, Arthur Would, and the David Karner family, which opened it as the "Brass Penny." The one side was a dining room with a long bar to the left of the entry. The Karner's had a paper maché horse, which stood on the porch for many years. This "conversation piece", over 100 years old, was originally a saddle mannequin for a saddle maker.

Whatever happened to this horse?

In 1989 this building was purchased and extensively renovated by Kim Chatfield and reopened as an American Grill called "Chatfields."

On this same property is a small blue building, leaning with age, which was the original icehouse for the hotel.

If the walls of this Gladstone Hotel could talk they'd give us some interesting historical facts and information about the many guests who stayed there. The original register books of the hotel were given by a member of the Vliet family to the Historical Preservation Commission of Peapack-Gladstone and are on display in the glass case in the Borough Hall.

Friends of the KMS Farmstead News

On Wednesday morning, September 14, the Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead celebrated the completion of the first phase of the English Barn project. To show the Friends' appreciation for steadfast support, members were invited to the farmstead, along with Bernards Township and Somerset County officials, where everyone enjoyed breakfast in the beautiful and newly weather-tight barn. This was the first event held at the farmstead by the Friends group, which signed a 25-year lease for the property earlier this year.

The next phase of work at the Farmstead is already underway. Plans for work on the Farmhouse and Wagon House, as well as additional work on the English Barn, are being prepared for the bidding process. This next phase will utilize \$440,000 in grant funds from the State of New Jersey Historic Trust.

Be sure to watch for news of future public events at the Farmstead. Or, even better, become a member of the Friends now so you don't miss the next special member event at this historic landmark! For membership information, contact John Campbell at 908-647-2241 or junejohn@optonline.net.

Archeology at the Brick Academy

THSSH Trustee Don Lorenz has arranged for Dr. Alan Cooper, head of the Lenni Lenape project at the Lord Stirling Environmental Education Center, to lead a small group of volunteer archeologists to examine and identify the Corbitt collection of Native American artifacts that are on display in the Research Room at the Brick Academy. Housed in an impressive display cabinet, the artifacts have never been curated. The artifacts were collected approximately a hundred years ago on the property that is now the site of the Verizon headquarters.

Anyone interested in finding out more about this project or how to participate may call Don at 647-5025 or email him at dhlorenz@att.net.

New Acquisitions in the Brick Academy Archives

The Historical Society has recently acquired two important items on Basking Ridge history. The first item is a scrap album compiled by Nettie Allen during the first decades of the 20th century when she lived in Madisonville. The album contains early photographs and local postcards, many of which are views new to THSSH's collection.

The second item is a fascinating report on Bernards Township, called "Basking Ridge: The Study of a Town in Transition" written by Janet Carswell around 1939, when she was a student at Montclair State Teachers College. The report is a vividly written description of the township and its population. Particularly interesting are the photographs of the center of Basking Ridge, which capture a detailed panorama view of the village as a moment in time.

The report and scrapbook items will be archivally preserved and will be available to view in the Research Room.

Historic Preservation Committee Undertakes New Project

By Ann Parsekian

Motivated by recently acquired new materials about Madisonville, HPC members have researched the history of this small hamlet and compiled a collection of historic photographs and information about its historic houses.

Typically viewed only while rushing to or from Route 287, some people might be surprised at the substantial number of historic resources in Madisonville. The

Historic Preservation Committee (Cont'd)

hamlet of Madisonville was settled before the Revolutionary War. Both North Maple Avenue and Madisonville Road predate the American Revolution. The Continental Army regularly used both roads. General Rochambeau, on his critically important march to Yorktown, used North Maple Avenue. It is believed that Continental soldiers were served coffee at the house that still stands at the corner. Considering the Patriots' distaste for tea, it is understandable that a place serving coffee – the new national drink – would be memorable, and the hamlet has long been popularly known as “Coffee House Corner.” The Coffee House is listed on the National Register.

Near the old sawmill pond on Madisonville Road is the Corbett House. This impressive house was built around 1870 and is considered the finest example of Italianate style in Bernards Township. For the last 31 years, it has served as headquarters of the Passaic River Coalition, a compatible use that resulted in the noteworthy preservation of interior and exterior architectural details.

Madisonville has five East Jersey Cottages from the 18th and early 19th century and four dwellings from the same period that are good examples of Federal-period architecture. These buildings form an important concentration of the township's 35 remaining early houses.

Altogether, twelve 18th and 19th century buildings in the immediate vicinity are listed in the Somerset County Inventory as well as Bernards Township's own Inventory of Historic Houses. Two buildings are listed as eligible for the National Register, including the Corbett House. Seven additional houses have been identified as potentially eligible for the National Register. Nearby is the nationally significant Boudinot-Southard Mansion, which is also eligible for the National Register. The mansion has recently been acquired by Somerset County as part of its purchase of the Ross property.

The early crossroads hamlet was settled in the early 1700s and functioned through the 1800s as a small service center for the surrounding farms. In Israel Rickey's 1729 will that describes his 160 acres, which encompassed the property where the Coffee House stands, there is a reference to “Freeman's mill,” indicating by that date there were settlers and commerce in the area. A mill, probably the same one, is referenced in Elias Boudinot's 1785 deed of sale that refers to land near “where said Rigg's Mill formerly

stood.” In 1804, the road from Madisonville west to Vealtown was laid out by order of the county. The order refers to a “David Simpson shop,” indicating additional commercial development had taken place in the hamlet. The first tavern license was issued in 1806 and the application refers to a store on the property. An 1818 real estate advertisement mentions “a Store House, in which much business has been done, and a “snug new and comfortable House, with a Black Smiths Shop, an excellent stand for the Smith's business.” A manuscript map drawn that same year indicates “Madisonville Coffe house” and the nearby sawmill. Two years later, there was a spoke and hub factory at the crossroads.

By 1850, there was also a W. Sh. (Wagon Shop?), according to an atlas published that year. By 1870, there was a carpentry shop just south of the crossroads. In an 1873 atlas, Madisonville rated an inset map. The spoke and hub factory was still in operation, as was the mill, blacksmith, and general store. A few years later, the general store on the corner also included a post office substation and a second floor jewelry store. Nearby was a butcher who operated out of his cellar, selling meat from his wagon. According to Snell's description of the small hamlet in 1881 there were two mills, one between Madisonville and Bernardsville, with Richard Irving the proprietor, and the other on the Passaic, owned by James Osborn who did “a considerable business for the New York and California trade.”

Atlases for 1850, 1860 and 1873 document the growth of the hamlet, which never surpassed that of Basking Ridge, but retained special importance for its mill operation and hub and spoke factory. The 1873 atlas shows a new railroad that had a station convenient to Basking Ridge, but which bypassed Madisonville. Madisonville's commercial growth stagnated by the late 19th century, but the neighborhood attracted several wealthy “gentlemen farmers,” for example Charles Rogers, who in 1911 expanded and enlarged an already-grand house, now the home of the Montessori School. One final industry established in Madisonville was a large greenhouse operation that continued to the mid-20th century. It was established by Mr. Rogers and was located on the property developed as Maple Run.

Clearly, the Madisonville neighborhood is an important part of Bernards Township's heritage, so slow down and look around the next time you drive through!

HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR SET FOR DECEMBER 4

Reserve the date of Sunday, December 4. The Society's bi-annual Holiday House Tour will feature a half dozen area homes, ranging in age from 1740s to contemporary times. Always a sell-out success, this fund-raiser draws "tourists" from throughout New Jersey, who enjoy viewing the holiday-decorated residences. Members are encouraged to serve on the various Tour committees: Hostessing, Parking, Advertising, Publicity. Contact June Campbell at (908) 647-2241 to sign up.

A NEW JERSEY CHRISTMAS

(From the Diary of an Officer on Washington's Staff, THE BATTLE OF TRENTON AND PRINCETON, by William S. Stryker, 1898.)

"December 25--Christmas morning. They make a great deal of Christmas in Germany, and no doubt the Hessians will drink a great deal of beer and have a dance tonight. They will be sleepy tomorrow morning. Washington will set the tune for them about daybreak. The rations are cooked. New flints and ammunition have been distributed. Colonel Glover's fishermen from Marblehead, Massachusetts, are to manage the boats just as they did in the retreat from Long Island.

Christmas, 6 p.m.--The regiments have had their evening parade, but instead of returning to their quarters are marching toward the ferry. It is fearfully cold and raw and a snowstorm setting in. The wind is northeast and beats in the faces of the men. It will be a terrible night for the soldiers who have no shoes. Some of them have tied old rags around their feet; others are barefoot, but I have not heard a man complain. They are ready to suffer any hardship and die rather than give up their liberty. I have just copied the order for marching. Both divisions are to go from the ferry to Bear Tavern, two miles. They will separate there; Washington will accompany Greene's division with a part of the artillery down the Pennington Road; Sullivan and the rest of the artillery will take the river road."

HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF LONG AGO

In 1791 Somerset County had no post office but mail was routed between Philadelphia and Morristown via Princeton and Basking Ridge on horseback, sulky or stage and was called "The Post". Postage was fixed at 30 miles for 6¢. Basking Ridge Post Office was established September 18, 1802. With the arrival of the railroad from Summit to Basking Ridge in 1872,

mail service over the road went into effect. Rural delivery service was launched in 1905.

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Alfred Vail, who collaborated with Samuel F. B. Morse on inventing the telegraph in 1838, was related to the Basking Ridge family of Vail's. He was a city cousin. Vail and Morse sent messages to each other at Historic Speedwell on over two miles of wire. The factory on Route 202 in Morris Plains is a national landmark. Country cousin was Israel Vail, who lived in Basking Ridge. A small Vail family cemetery is on Tilcon Quarry land, Stonehouse Road. Theodore Vail, a former president of AT&T, was also related.

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Duke Gardens, Route 206, Somerville, is actually a series of interconnected greenhouses. Garden themes, the vision of James Buchanan Duke, founder of the American Tobacco Company, include Italian, Edwardian, French, Chinese, English Indo-Persian, Japanese, desert, etc.. He bought a large tract of land in 1893 and increased it without straining his wallet. At a cost of over \$10 million, the gardens reflect hours of work by landscapers, gardeners and laborers, with shrubs, trees, bulbs, and plants imported from all over the world. There are nine manmade lakes and 200 feet of high hills and is reminiscent of magnificent palaces of European royalty. Duke Gardens are open October through May for tours.

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On April 6, 1917 the United States formally entered World War I. June 5, 1917 was Registration Day in Bernards Township for men ages 21-31. There were many parades and demonstrations with special services held in all the churches. Young men left for training camps. By November 1917 Bernards had oversubscribed by 80% its quota of the Second Liberty Loan, and the government raised letter postage from 2¢ to 3¢!

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The Friends of the Oak Tree was organized in 1923 to save the 600-year old oak tree in the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church yard. The tree trunk was cleaned of its disease by the Davey Tree Company, leaving space for four men to stand in the trunk! Three tons of concrete were poured into the cavity. The tree, a landmark for centuries, is supported by pipes and wires to protect its spreading branch weight. This tree is referenced in many important vintage documents throughout the years.

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In 1933 Morristown National Historic Park was

## HISTORICAL SKETCHES (Cont'd)

dedicated, and was the first national historic park in the United States. There were 1,200 huts at Jockey Hollow during George Washington's encampment at Morristown during the winter of 1779-1780. All were destroyed, and five, built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, exist today. There are three areas of the Park: Fort Nonsense, an earthwork and "busy project" that no longer exists; Jockey Hollow; and Washington's Headquarters where Martha Washington joined her husband for 200 days, the historic museum and library. The complex is operated by the National Park Service and is currently undergoing an \$8 million expansion and rehabilitation.

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At the June, 1941 dedication service of the new Liberty Corner flagpole, the soloist was a former Metropolitan Opera soprano, Anna Case Mackay, whose daughter, Ellen Mackay, was Mrs. Irving Berlin, wife of the noted composer.

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Four U.S. Senators representing New Jersey were Princeton University graduates and received their earlier education at the Basking Ridge Classical School. They were: Samuel L. Southard (1787-1842); Theodore Freylinghuysen (1787-1861); William Lewis Dayton (1807-1864) and Robert Field Stockton (1795-1866). Southard was Chief Justice of the NJ Supreme Court, U.S. Secretary of the Navy, Governor of New Jersey, Attorney General of NJ, and Acting Senate President under President John Tyler. Freylinghuysen was also Mayor of Newark, Chancellor of the University of the City of New York, President of Rutgers College, Vice-Presidential candidate with Henry Clay in 1844 and Attorney General of NJ. Dayton was a vice-presidential candidate in 1856 with John C. Fremont, and President Lincoln's Ambassador to France during the Civil War. Stockton was a naval officer (War of 1812), hero of the Mexican War, reorganized the Naval Department and was a businessman (West Jersey Railroad, Delaware & Raritan Canal).

### SEPTEMBER 23, 2005 MARKED 77th BIRTHDAY OF SOCIETY

September 23, 2005 marked the 77th anniversary of the founding of the Basking Ridge Historical Society, forerunner of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills. In 1928, a group of Bernards Township residents met in the Maple Avenue School (site of the present Bernards Township Library) and decided to organize and foster local history. Programs were in the school, members' homes, the library at 2 North Finley Avenue,

and later in Town Hall, then in the Brick Academy. In 1975, municipal offices relocated to Collyer Lane.

The Society leases the Brick Academy from Bernards Township and preserves its history, provides factual information and offers programs on history to all. In 1988, in an effort to broaden its horizon, the name of the organization was changed to The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills.

In 1990, a new 50-year lease was written, for the continuous use of the Brick Academy, from the local government. The Society "shall have exclusive use of the premises and shall endeavor to restore, renovate and preserve the building, in view of its historical significance."

The public is invited to become members of the Society.

### SIGNIFICANT DATES RELATING TO THE SOMERSET HILLS

1688

Somerset County set off from Middlesex on May 22.

1699

Early settlers in Bedminster area are Huguenots, Scots-Irish and later, Germans from the Palatinate-- John Van Doren, Hugh Gaston, the Castners, Craigs and others.

1717

Large contingent of Scots-Irish Presbyterians arrive in Bernards Township area. John Harrison, agent of the King of England, who purchased land from Indians, sells parcels for development. Also, there are "squatters" who occupy area.

1722

John Annin (really John Johnston of Annandale, Scotland) arrives in Bernards and soon takes title to 1,000 acres purchased for him by his father. The settlement is known as Annin's Corner until the Revolution, when the area's name is changed to Liberty Corner.

Logtown, a distinct settlement near Basking Ridge, is founded and exists 100 years as an independent community along Hardscrabble Road. It may have been named for a sawmill or logs brought in for an iron forge. In 1723 an Englishman, Canfield, establishes a fulling and textile mill and brings in workers from abroad to man it. Several multi-family houses are said to have been built near the mill for workers. During the period of greatest activity, there is believed to have been a gristmill, a carpet weaving

## SIGNIFICANT DATES (Cont'd)

shop, several stores and some mechanics' shops. Nearby farms raise wool and flax for local sale.

1776

In May, Frederick Freylinghuysen, William Paterson, John Witherspoon, Jacob Hardenbergh and James Linn serve as Somerset's delegates to the Provincial Congress meeting in Burlington.

1806

Warren Township is formed from Bernards and Bridgewater Townships.

1809

The Basking Ridge Classical School (the Brick Academy) is built in Basking Ridge, its pupils drawn from areas along the Eastern Seaboard. Graduates enter the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

1832

The Lenape Indians accept \$2,000 from the white settlers for relinquishing their remaining hunting and fishing rights in Somerset County.

1872

The railroad arrives! Many more people settle in area.

1890

In the '90s, flamboyant Bernardsville mountain life reaches its peak with polo matches, private racetracks, balls, servants' balls, commuters' coaches-and-fours racing-to the railroad station. The town grows as large numbers of Italian and Hungarian artisans and gardeners, and English and Irish servants are brought in to build and serve the great estates. At 5 A.M. each morning, it is said, bands of laborers start for work up the mountain, many on foot, singing. Today, the estates are being divided into smaller acre plots.

1912

Peapack-Gladstone is set off from Bedminster Township as an independent borough.

1921

Far Hills is set off from Bernards Township.

1924

Bernardsville is set off from Bernards Township.

1931

The Veterans Administration Hospital at Lyons opens its doors to receive and treat the nation's veterans.

AS THEY SAY, THE REST IS HISTORY.....

## Volunteer Needed

THSSH is in need of a volunteer to arrange speakers for the six public Meetings we hold per year.

David Stone who arranged these programs for us for a number of years has retired. This job is an interesting but not difficult job. There are people to help with suggestions and it is possible for more than one person to tackle this effort. The meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of March, April, May, June, October, and November.

If you would like to give this job a try, please call June Campbell at 908-647-2241.

## DUES NOTICE

Dues letters have just gone out to all members. The Board would appreciate your prompt payment of dues and renewal of your membership. We also ask Life members to consider making a contribution to THSSH. Thank You.

## *Inside the Brick Academy*

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