

The Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER



Volume 35, Issue Three

October, 2010

November Pot Luck Supper
Friday, November 5 at 6:30 PM
First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall

Please bring a dish or dessert to share, as well as your own plates and utensils. Beverages will be provided.

Our featured guest will be Robert Mayers, author of *The War Man: The True Story of a Citizen-Soldier Who Fought from Quebec to Yorktown*.

The War Man gives an intimate portrait of a real soldier of the American Revolution. Using letters, muster rolls, orderly books, service records and oral family history, Robert Mayers reconstructs the campaign life of his ancestor and Haverstraw native Corporal John Allison. Allison's service spanned the entire war, from 1775 to 1783. Amazingly, Allison was present at the most critical and pivotal events in the War. He personally witnessed the surrender at Yorktown and was an eyewitness to the activities of General George Washington.

Mayers' account spans the freezing Canadian wilderness, through the battle of Fort Montgomery and the Sullivan-Clinton campaign against the Iroquois, to the bitter winter at Morristown and the American victory at Yorktown, VA.

During Allison's eight-year military career, he survived numerous skirmishes and battles across the colonies, was promoted to the rank of corporal, and returned home a local hero. Mayers' lecture offers the unique opportunity to follow the entire course of the American Revolution through the eyes of a front-line volunteer.

Michelle Newman-Dickey
Mia Lindberg, Co-Vice Presidents and
Program Chairs

President's Message

As CHPS members, we can feel proud of all the Society has accomplished this year. Our Parsonage Barn reconstruction project is nearing completion, and we are looking forward to the Dedication on November 7th. We have had three excellent exhibits at the Museum and a new one will open on November 14. The expanded second edition of *George Washington in Cranbury* by John Chambers was published by the Society in the spring, and we designed the official Cranbury Township flag.

Our sale table on Main Street and the spinning demonstration and activity at the Museum on Cranbury Day were successful, as was our autumn Plant and Pumpkin sale. Cranbury School's 4th grade class toured the Museum on October 11.

Upcoming are our Annual Meeting & Pot Luck Supper on November 5, Christmas Tea at the Museum on December 5, *Cranbury Wassail* fundraiser on December 11, and the Holiday Shoppe at the Museum on December 18.

I hope you have enjoyed being a member of the Society this year and plan to support CHPS in the year ahead. I invite you to consider honoring someone with the gift of membership in the Society and to bring a guest to our Pot Luck Supper on November 5.

Audrey Smith, President

Jerry Pevahouse to be Honored

Jerry Pevahouse, who has been active in CHPS for many years, will be honored at the Annual Meeting on November 5 with a gift of gratitude for his dedication and years of service to the Society. Jerry most recently served as a Museum Curator.

A Festive Fall Feeling!

The crisp fall air after a long hot summer! Mums, pumpkins and cornstalks to replace tired geraniums on our front steps! Thanks to all who participated in the Society's annual fall plant sale. The year the Society sold over 500 mums, cornstalks and ornamental cabbages and kale. Plus, this year we also offered pumpkins and sold 200! Cranbury will be colorful indeed this season thanks to all who supported this annual fundraiser. Coordinators Karen Fiorentini and Normadelle Swale also wish to thank all those who supported the event by delivering the plants to homeowners.



Museum Gardens Normadelle Swale

First we had a *very* wet spring when everything grew vigorously. Then came summer — hot and dry! The lawn and plants turned brown. Now, for the last few cold weeks, torrents of rain.

We removed a dead boxwood bush from the back garden and trimmed out the dead branches from the others. Perennials planted by Karen and me died from the drought. The hostas and peonies drooped but hung on; the Solomon seals surprising loved the heat, and the day lilies did their thing.

Now we have some new residents — ground hogs who are overeating their “welcome” by dining on hostas and our beautiful pineapple sage in the pots by the back entrance, just as they were ready to burst into bloom.

Don Davidson and Jim Swale cut down a weed tree in the hedge row. Don is a great hands-on help in the garden and we hope he stays on our committee. George and Audrey Smith have also been active in the garden.

Thanks go out, too, to some young men from Princeton High who renovated the lawn as part of their community service!

Cranbury Press Digitized

The Cranbury Public Library has digitized The Cranbury Press from 1886 to 2009. The project began in 2002 when the library partnered with CHPS to secure a grant from the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission. The Historical Cranbury Press, launched in 2004, has issues from 1886 to 1926 that can be accessed from the library's website at www.cranburypubliclibrary.org. Now all issues have been saved to a searchable PDF format and stored on a portable hard drive in the library for access by the public.



Museum Docents

Please consider joining the team of dedicated and enthusiastic Museum docents who share our beautiful Museum with visitors on Sunday afternoons. If you would like to learn how you can become a docent, please contact Bonnie at lee.wagman@att.blackberry.net or visit the Museum any Sunday between 1 and 4 PM.



Holiday Shoppe Offers New Gift Items

The CHPS Holiday Shoppe at the History Center will be open Saturday, December 18 from 10 AM to 2 PM.

Several items to consider for your holiday gift giving are available at the History Center and Museum. Among them are the Cranbury afghan, \$50; Cranbury flag, \$50; wooden ornament with painting of the Museum by Nadine Berkowsky, \$15; *George Washington in Cranbury* by John Chambers, \$12.95; Historic Cranbury envirosax bag, \$12; Historic Cranbury t-shirt in adult and youth sizes, \$10; canvas bookmark, \$3.50.



An Invitation...

The Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society invites you to attend its annual traditional Christmas tea on Sunday, December 5 from 1 to 4 PM at the historic Cranbury Museum. Please join us as we start the holiday season with delicious spiced tea, served in our own vintage tea cups, along with a scrumptious variety of homemade cookies while enjoying the sights and sounds of a Victorian Christmas. Please bring the *little angels* by. There will be a separate punch and cookie table for them as well. Each year the Museum's period-inspired rooms are decorated by a staff of talented volunteers who create the feeling of warmth and beauty of days gone by. We look forward to seeing you there.



Please mark your calendar for another important annual tradition...the stringing of the popcorn and cranberry luncheon held at the Museum. We will be trimming the tree on Thursday, December 2, beginning at 10 AM. After the last cranberry and popcorn strand is strung and each beautiful ornament hung, we will enjoy a light luncheon of tea sandwiches and sweets. This event is a lot of fun and a nice way to gather with friends, old and new, as we prepare for the busy days of the holiday season.

For more information please call 609-409-1289 or email historycenter@comcast.net.

A Cranbury Wassail

Cranbury Wassail, a progressive tour of Historic Cranbury Main Street homes decorated for the holidays, will be held on Saturday, December 11, beginning at 7 PM. Festive refreshments, beverages and a guest from Cranbury's history will be featured in each home. Tickets are \$30 each. As the newsletter went to press the event was sold out. To get on a waiting list, please call 609-655-5361.



Tomorrow's Antiques on Display at the Museum



As we close the "Family Heirlooms" exhibit, we would like to thank all the local families who helped make this a huge success. The "heirlooms" were on display through October 24.

We are excited to announce that our next exhibit, "Tomorrow's Antiques" featuring American Girl dolls and Hess trucks, will open on Sunday, November 14 and run through February 20, 2011. Each child who visits the exhibit between November 14 and December 19, accompanied by an adult, will be entered into one of two free drawings. Girls have a chance to win an American girl "Paint Filly" and boys have a chance to win a "Hess Truck." There will be two winners in each drawing. The prize winners will be announced on December 19, 4 PM, at the Museum. Don't miss this opportunity to rekindle childhood memories and create new ones with your children or grandchildren. The gifts for the drawings have been donated by a CHPS family member.



Photo: NASA.GOV

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of TIROS 1 (Television Infra-Red Observation Satellite)

*With appreciation for the contributions of former Cranbury residents
Max Mesner (1910-2004) and Carl Osgood.*

“The Tiros team objective was to design, build and launch a satellite that would provide pictures from outer space of the planet Earth, especially of its cloud cover over large regions.”

“Shortly after the launch of Sputnik in 1957, the US House of Representatives asked several space experts for their forecasts of what the US space program might achieve in the next decade. The experts’ prediction was that great improvements in weather forecasting will become possible with a satellite providing rapid overall data on cloud cover and atmospheric transmissions...this held tremendous implications, both civilian and military. There was consensus among several contributors that better weather coverage, particularly cloud-cover photography, could be immensely helpful to US intelligence efforts.”

“In 1958, the Dept. of Defense began work on what would become the first meteorological satellite, TIROS. Within the year the program was transferred to the newly formed National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) with the US Weather Bureau designated to provide satellite instrumentation, data reduction and analysis of observations. TIROS was placed in orbit April, 1960 with TIROS 2 following soon thereafter.”

“Max Mesner was a key member of the team of engineers at RCA Laboratories in Princeton who worked under David Sarnoff in the late 40s and early 50s to develop the color television system that became the standard for broadcasting in the US. He went on to join the new RCA Astro Space Division in East Windsor where he did pioneering development of high resolution electronic imaging for the US space program. He led the TIROS camera team efforts at RCA Lab 3. Between 1960 and 1966, RCA video recorders were used on all 11 TIROS weather satellites without a single mission failure.” “NASA came to trust RCA because we so thoroughly tested our equipment that we didn’t have failures. On the basis of this confidence, RCA also got the contract for the TV cameras on the space shuttles” said Mr. Mesner in 2000 for the Rossmoor News.

Carl Osgood, who with his wife Frances, lived for many years on North Main St. in Cranbury, was “manager of mechanical and thermal engineering for RCA’s Astro-Electronics Division...spending the last half of the 50s leading a team of fellow engineers charged with designing and building the TIROS 1 satellite.” “My only instruction at the was ‘get your metallurgical engineering section together quick! We were straight out for about three years before April 1, [1960]. There was a lot of suspense...TIROS 1 was the first satellite that was designed and built and proved to be successful while in orbit. It was the first one. There was no precedent...RCA emerged as a world leader in the satellite scientific industry that morning. After leaving RCA in 1971, Osgood worked as a private consultant for several organizations, including...Nuclear Fusion Laboratory in Princeton. Carl now winters in Richmond, VA and summers in Surry, ME with daughter Jane and family.

“The TIROS 1 spacecraft survived 1,302 orbits, generated 23,000 pictures of Earth before it ceased operating in June 1960. TIROS 1 not only led the way to new understandings in meteorology, but also broadened humanity’s view of our Earth — its natural wonders and its place in the Universe.”

We are certainly thankful for the historical accomplishments of these two RCA engineers and former Cranbury residents — what would we do without the Weather Channel!

With thanks to: George Martch; Crosslinks, the Aerospace Corporation magazine of advances in aerospace technology; Ellsworth American, April 1, 2010; Rossmoor News, Feb. 2000.

WYCKOFF'S MILLS
Cranbury's Forgotten Industry
By Roi Taylor

Wyckoff's Mills, not the development along North Main Street in Hightstown, but the site located on Wyckoff's Mills Road in the southeast corner of Cranbury bordered by Monroe Township and the Millstone River has been overlooked in history of its early industrial days. Monroe Township, Cranbury and East Windsor surrounded the millpond, which no longer exists.

The only account of Wyckoff's Mills at the Cranbury History Center is in a memoriam for Elizabeth Wyckoff Davison, wife of Ancil McLean Davison, printed in the Hightstown Gazette, 1931.

Wyckoff's Mills was bought by Jacob Wyckoff, born 1762, who grew up on his father Arthur's property along the Cranbury Brook. It is stated in the article that the earliest records indicate the property was recorded as Causman's. Researching the property deeds to find the dates of property ownership could be a good research project for interested people. Any volunteers?

In 1786, Jacob Wyckoff married his cousin Lydia Wyckoff, of Weston Mills near New Brunswick. Ten years earlier at age 13 Lydia was alone outside her parents' farmhouse. Her father Peter was off fighting in the Revolutionary War and her mother was at another location of the farm tending to the stock and provisions which had been hidden away from looting Tories. A party of Tories rode up and asked Lydia to give them dinner. She quietly talked to them while glancing at the house and told them they had to be quiet so no one at the house would take notice. She offered to make them a potpie if they would collect wood and start a fire. Lydia prepared the meal in a large black kettle over the fire. After eating the meal they rode off with a polite thank you. The black kettle went along with Lydia to Wyckoff's Mills.

Peter, Jacob and Lydia's eldest son born in 1787, married Elizabeth Baird in 1820. He took over the mill after his father died in 1833 and enlarged the business by adding a sawmill, tannery and other establishments to make Wyckoff's Mills a busy center of industry. In 1855 Peter's son David, born 1824, succeeded and added tenant houses for the miller and workmen. The gristmill produced various types of flour for the city markets. 1846 David Wyckoff married Elizabeth Perrine, daughter of Matthias Mount Perrine of Cranbury. "Mr. Wyckoff popularized the place by adding boathouses and boats and the place became a favorite resort for fishermen and pleasure lovers. Mr. Wyckoff freely tendering his boats and Mrs. Wyckoff, always hospitable, entertained lavishly.¹"

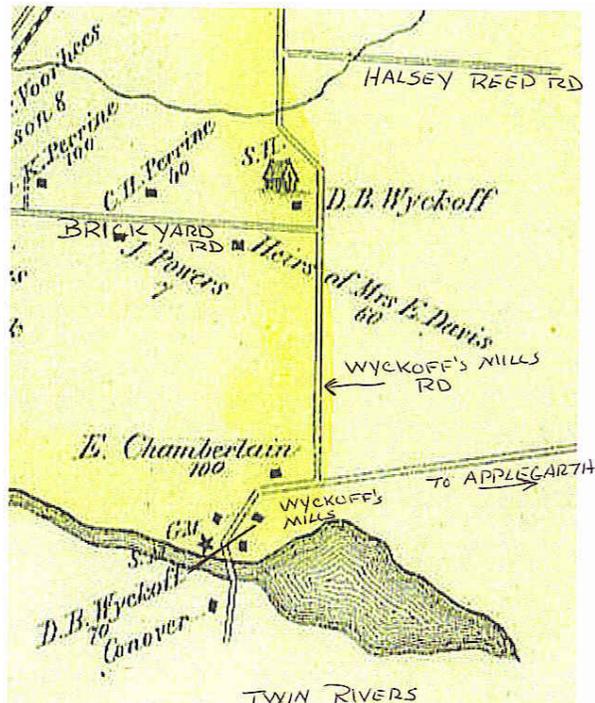
David and Elizabeth's daughter, Elizabeth born in 1859, married Ancil McLean Davison in 1879. They became the owners of the farm and mills where they remained until 1915 when they retired to Monmouth Street in Hightstown. Ancil M. Davison was the father of Ancil Jr. for whom Ancil Davison Road is named. Ancil Jr. was the uncle of Asa T. Davison Jr., the father of Doris Davison Parry and Harold Davison a partner in Lowe, Davison & Barnes; the spinach guys! Doris Parry wrote about the Ancil McLean Davison farm on Wyckoff's Mills Road for the October 2002, Vol. 27 CHPS newsletter.

Tragedy arrived August 29, 1859 when David & Elizabeth's 19 month old daughter Virginia drowned in the millpond. Strangely, or morbidly, this is the only story of the millpond passed down over the years.

The original farmhouse, mills and millpond are gone but farming continues. Try to imagine mills, boat-houses, boats and millpond with the overgrowth of vegetation along the river today.

¹"Memoriam," *Hightstown Gazette*.

(Continued from previous page)



From - Map of Cranbury Township
Everts & Stewart, Phila. 1876
GM refers to the gristmill - SM refers to the sawmill

Ref: "Memoriam," *Hightstown Gazette*. [Hightstown, Mercer Co.] Thursday, June 11, 1931

Wyckoff, Wm. M. & Streeter, M. B. *The Wyckoff Family in America*.
Rutland, VT: 1934. The Tuttle Co.

Genealogy Files. *Wyckoff & Davison*. Cranbury History Center

Scenes from Cranbury Day, 2010

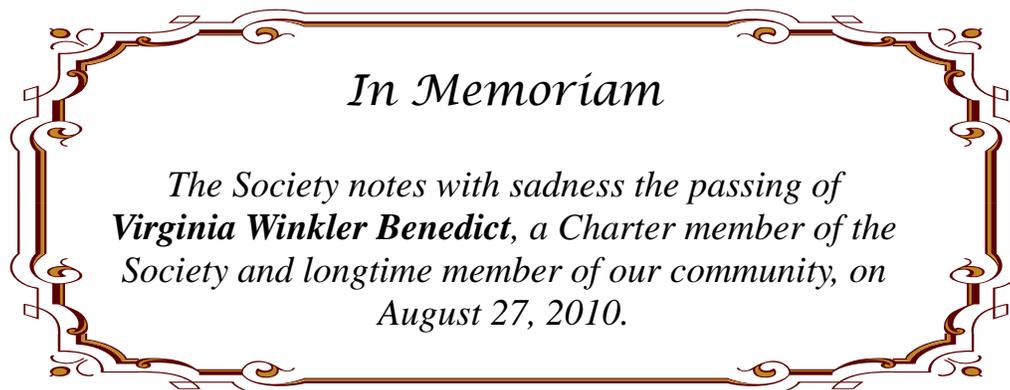
On the left a young visitor learns about the (nearly) lost art of yarn spinning, at the Museum.
On the right, the scene on Main Street, where the Society's sales and membership table was busy all day long!



Membership News

It's not too late to use the membership form below to renew your membership for 2010, nor is it too early to begin thinking about supporting the Society in 2011! You may complete the form below and mail in your dues or bring it with you to the Pot Luck Supper and Annual Meeting on November 5.

Thanks to all who supported CHPS this year by generously giving your time, talent and resources. Your efforts on behalf of local history and preservation are very much appreciated.



A Warm Welcome!

We are happy to have as our newest Society members Mona Bhatia, Mary Mikula and Brian Schilling. Thank you for joining us!

2010 Membership Form

Mail checks to: **Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society**, P.O. Box 77, Cranbury, NJ 08512

Membership Status (check one): New Renewal

Membership Category (check one): Individual, \$15.00 Family, \$25.00 Sponsor, \$35.00
 Patron, \$50.00 or more Corporate, \$150.00 or more

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Matching gifts are a significant source of support for the Society. If you work (or have retired from) one of the hundreds of companies that generously match employee donations, please don't let this opportunity pass you by. Just ask your Personnel Office for a Matching Gift form, fill it in and send it to us. We'll do the rest. Together we can continue to preserve our unique heritage.

Please consider one or more of the following volunteer opportunities: Museum docent: _____ Social functions: _____

House tour: _____ Educational programs: _____ Fundraising: _____ Publicity: _____

Other: _____



An Invitation

*Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society
Invites you to attend the
Dedication of the Parsonage Barn
On Sunday, the seventh of November
Two Thousand and Ten
At Two O'clock in the Afternoon
Barn Park
Cranbury Neck Road*

Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society
4 Park Place East
PO Box 77
Cranbury, NJ 08512

Cranbury's 4th graders Tour the Museum

Fourth graders across the state spend time learning about the rich history of the Garden State. Here in Cranbury, the three 4th grade classes were treated to guided tours of the Cranbury Museum. Docents Lisa Beach and Don Davidson in period garb, helped the students develop a better understanding and appreciation of 19th century life as it would have been experienced by residents at that time. Don worked closely with 4th grade lead teach, Donna Tarantino, to develop an appropriate program for the students.

The Historical Society plans to expand its school tour programs this coming spring to both 4th and 5th grades, to include guided walking tours of Cranbury with special emphasis on the contributions of David Brainerd in the 1740s and the activities of General George Washington and his men as they visited our town on their way to the Battle of Monmouth in June, 1778.

It is hoped these class tours can become a regular yearly activity for the Cranbury School and provide our young residents with a sense of pride in the rich historical significance of our village.

Cranbury Museum

4 Park Place East
Open Sundays 1 to 4 and by appt.
Ph: 609/655-2611

Cranbury History Center

6 South Main Street
Open Tuesdays 10:30 to 1:30 & by appt.
Ph: 609/860-1889
Email: historycenter@comcast.net
Web: www.cranburyhistory.org
Webmaster: Webmaster@cranburyhistory.org