

**CRANBURY MUSEUM
4 PARK PLACE
CRANBURY, NEW JERSEY**

Originally written by Paul Masselli, 1983
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If you wanted to paint your woodwork and doors blue in the 1800s, you simply concocted a mixture of blueberries and buttermilk and applied a couple of coats. That's what Garret P. Voorhees, a Cranbury doctor, did in the three room home at 4 Park Place in 1834. Lead-base and water-base paints come and go, but there's something to be said for blueberries and buttermilk – the paint is still there after all these years.

The simple three-room home, often called a 'Settler's Cabin', expanded twice, once in the 1860s and again in 1975, now houses the Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society (CHPS) Museum.

"The main purpose of the museum is to preserve the history of Cranbury," according to CHPS. The home was bought from Marvin Dey in 1972, and the museum opened in October, 1972.

"The home was completely restored at that time with the idea of making the museum look like a small town home, typical of Cranbury," according to CHPS.

Much of the success of the museum, which is open to the public Sundays from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, is attributed to its current curator and many docents.

Supported completely by the more than 300 member families of the Society, the museum is self-sustaining and receives no government funds.

Most of the furniture and other artifacts are donated by Cranbury residents. Cranbury is truly a unique community, one that really cares about its history. That's what makes the museum so special, according to CHPS.

Every three to four months a different 'special' exhibit is displayed in the Arthur E Perrine wing an addition to the building. This exhibit room was donated in memory of Mr. Perrine, a world famous horticulturalist and

Cranbury resident by his daughter, Mary Perrine. The articles on display have all been loaned to the museum for exhibition.

One of the three original rooms was originally used as a storage shed but is now a kitchen. The kitchen flooring and ceiling boards are made of 14-inch pumpkin pine. Typical of the industrial age, gadgetry decorating the stove includes a waffle iron which can be turned over, and sad irons with removable handles. On the corner table sit a raisin seeder, a cherry pitter, a collar and cuff ringer press, and a mechanical mixmaster. The Jelly cabinet is filled with kitchen items and bottles embossed "J.S. Silvers Co.," a Cranbury mill which produced wholesale supplies for many years until it burned down in the early 1900s. The rug beater and ice tongs hanging on the wall symbolize an era without vacuum cleaners and refrigeration. When little children see these things, they are amazed to learn that ice was delivered in large blocks, and that mothers used to hang up their rugs and beat the dust out of them.

When the Keeping Room or Dining room was renovated and an open fireplace or 'hearth' was uncovered, complete with its original 'bee hive' oven. The hearth has its original blue woodwork mantel (made from butter milk and blueberries) and visitors see a 6-foot wide, 5-foot high fireplace, stained charcoal black from soot. A tavern table from the Cranbury Inn dated to the mid-1800s sits next to the fireplace. The oval rug on the pumpkin pine floor was braided by a Cranbury woman out of the uniforms and blankets used by her grandfather in World War I. The oldest piece in the house, a rocking chair (or mother's chair) dates to the late 1700s and sits in front of the tavern table. It is believed that this chair came from New York State. A 100-year old pump organ from the First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury sits against another wall underneath embroidery samples. In another corner, sitting in front of the corner cupboard, sit a miniature table and chair. These small pieces of furniture were salesman's samples. They were used before the days of furniture stores with big display rooms. These samples might possibly have been made by the town undertaker at the A.S. Cole Funeral Home, since undertakes made their coffins and often doubled as the town's cabinetmaker.

Meandering into the front room, which was part of an addition built after 1860 along with an entrance hall, stairs, bedroom and a sewing room upstairs, one will see that these rooms have a distinctive Victorian style of decorating. This room, often called a 'Parlor', was heated with a cast-iron Franklin-type stove. The mantel supports an 1846 clock, with an inscription on its face that reads, "Hurry up, I have ticked others time away and I am ticking yours today." The carved furniture, the statuettes and the Bristol glass vases are richly ornate. A melodeon built in Boston in 1860 sits in the corner. A 'Butler's' desk sits in another corner of the Parlor. This was donated by the family of a Cranbury Doctor who, around 1900, is rumored to have made house calls for \$1 and delivered babies for \$8.

Upstairs, the children's bedroom displays many antique dolls, including a wax doll dating to 1845. The room also contains a spool bed; tricycle; cradle; various toys, including a 'Stereopticon' (view master); Kaleidoscope; and a "Magic Lantern", the forerunner to a modern slide projector.

Finally, in the Master or Parent's bedroom, sits another spool bed with a 'rope' mattress that supports the bed and tightened with a wooden crank. This was the first factory-produced furniture and was therefore used abundantly in the mid-1800s. A man's shaving utensils and a woman's curling iron sit on separate dressers. A man's derby hat and spats sit on top a chair next to the spool bed. Homes did not have closets in the 1800s, most clothing was kept in trunks or on wall pegs or racks.

Behind the house is a 'Carriage House' that holds tack equipment for horses, a horse harness, and an old-fashioned high wheeled sulky, used in harness racing, a horse-drawn sleigh and a restored passenger carriage.

Also, outside the house is Sara's Victorian Garden, named after Sara Hoffman who, along with Amy Evans, established the Cranbury Museum in the 1970s.

THE CRANBURY MUSEUM IS OPEN ON SUNDAYS

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Admission is Free

**Visit the Cranbury Historical and Preservation Society's website at:
<http://www.cranburyhistory.org>**

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