

Inside THE BRICK ACADEMY

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

May 2024

ARCHITECTURE OF THE GILDED AGE

A Signature Event to benefit the Historical Society



Phillip James Todd

Date: Sunday, May 19

Luncheon: 12 to 3:30pm

Ticket Price: \$125

BLAIRSDEN

Step into the grandeur of Blairsdene, a breathtaking example of Beaux-Arts architecture that will transport you to a bygone era of elegance and opulence. Built from 1897 to 1903 for Clinton Ledyard Blair, a visionary investment banker and founder of Blair and Company, this magnificent estate was designed by the renowned Gilded Age architects Carrère and Hastings. Their impressive portfolio includes iconic landmarks such as the Frick Mansion in New York and the New York Public Library.

Join us for a delightful lunch at Blairsdene and immerse yourself in the architectural wonders of the "Gilded Age" era. Afterwards, stroll the grounds while you observe Blairsdene with a different perspective.

Renowned author Phillip James Dodd will enlighten us on the splendor and allure of the Beaux-Arts architecture in New York and New Jersey. With a wealth of knowledge and a passion for classical and traditional architecture, Mr. Dodd is sure to captivate and inspire. Born in the United Kingdom and educated at the prestigious Prince of Wales' Institute of Architecture in London, Mr. Dodd brings a unique perspective to the world of architecture. As a Fellow Emeritus of the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, he is a respected authority in his field.

Don't miss this exclusive opportunity to lunch and learn at the enchanting Blairsdene, where the spirit of "Downton Abbey" and "The Gilded Age" awaits you.

This is an intimate gathering. Seating is limited. Please purchase tickets promptly at ...

<http://thssh.org/GildedAge>

THSSH Appoints Advisory Trustees



The Historical Society is pleased to welcome William J. Kearns (*left photo*) and Michael C. Vaccaro (*right photo*) of the Liberty Corner law firm Kearns Duffy & Vaccaro, P.C. to the Board as Advisory Trustees. In this capacity, they will consult on a wide range of legal concerns and bring their professional expertise and commitment to furthering our mission - to acquire, conserve and share historic artifacts and information; cultivate interest in local history; encourage preservation; facilitate research; interpret the Brick Academy; and operate the local history museum.



William Kearns, a third-generation attorney, has decades of professional experience in pertinent aspects of the law including real estate, insurance, trusts, probate, and administration matters. He began his impressive law career in 1967 as a partner in the firm of Kearns & Bruder. The practice, one of the oldest continuing firms in the Somerset Hills area, was originally established in 1887 by William J. Kearns, Esquire, grandfather of Mr. Kearns. William, his wife Virginia, and their family are longstanding residents of Basking Ridge.

Michael Vaccaro joined the law firm in July 2002 as an associate and was named full partner in 2005. After graduating from law school, he worked for an insurance defense firm in New Jersey as a trial attorney, then with several law clinics in Michigan, and served in the Monroe County District Attorney’s Office of Rochester New York. Mr. Vaccaro currently practices in the area of subrogation and recovery, investigating significant property damage claims. Michael, his wife Mary-Frances, and their family reside in Basking Ridge as well.

Since the firm’s origin in 1887, it has represented various non-profit organizations, mostly as pro bono advocates. Among the local charitable entities are St. James Parish of Basking Ridge, St. James School, Bishop Janes United Methodist Church, Basking Ridge Fire Co. No. 1, Basking Ridge Fire Co. No. 1 First Aid Squad Inc., Liberty Corner Fire Co. No. 1, St. Joseph’s Shrine, Holy Cross Cemetery, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Charter Day

Saturday, May 18

This year’s afternoon street fair, along South Finley Avenue in Basking Ridge, commemorates the May 24, 1760 granting of a Charter by King George II of England, establishing Bernardston Township. The formal charter was in appreciation of the services of Sir Francis Bernard as the Royal Governor of New Jersey from 1758 to 1760.

The Historical Society will again have a prominent presence in front of the Methodist Church and also welcome visitors to the Brick Academy on West Oak Street. Both Charter Day locations, from 12PM to 4PM, will highlight the non-profit organization’s mission, upcoming events, membership benefits, and volunteer opportunities.

Make history and post YOUR images on our Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/historicalsocietynj/>

Welcome New Members!

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| CTRA Associates, LLC | <i>Basking Ridge</i> |
| Alexandra Arroyo | <i>Far Hills</i> |
| Robert Blank &
Carolyn Wolfe | <i>Bernardsville</i> |
| Elizabeth Califano &
Family | <i>Bernardsville</i> |
| Jillian Clinedinst | <i>Hampton</i> |
| Anne Kennison | <i>Basking Ridge</i> |
| Ben Knezovic | <i>Basking Ridge</i> |
| Alex Miller | <i>Greenbrook Twp.</i> |
| Emanuel &
Roseann Troullos | <i>Basking Ridge</i> |

Reuben Freeman of Liberty Corner

Continued from page 3

On February 23, 1854, Reuben Freeman married Elizabeth Kirkpatrick. Both bride and groom are reported to be “colored.”¹⁰ In later records Reuben’s wife is named Ann, Anna, Ann E., or Eliza. Her full Christian names may have been Ann Elizabeth. The surnames of both groom and bride are interesting. Reuben could have adopted the name Freeman because technically, he was born free, but slaves and children of slaves often adopted the surnames of their masters. In 1831, a slaveowner named James Freeman of Bernards Township set free his negro slave Sam at the age of 31 years.¹¹ The maiden name of William Annin’s first wife was Kirkpatrick, which was another slaveholding family.¹²

The 1855 New Jersey State Census, shows only the name of the head of household, but lists a colored male and colored female in the household of William Annin of Bernards Township.¹³ These people were likely Reuben and Ann Elizabeth Freeman.

William Annin’s second wife Providence died in 1858, and on the 1860 U.S. Census, he is shown in Bernards Township with his third wife, Eliza Ames Anderson Annin. The household included William’s stepsons Charles Anderson (b. c.1850) and William T. Anderson (b. c.1852). Immediately following William’s household, Reuben (age 32) and Ann Freeman (age 25) are listed as a separate family in a separate dwelling. Reuben is described as a farm laborer, born in New Jersey. Ann was born in New York.¹⁴

On the 1870 U.S. Census, Reuben and Ann E. Freeman are listed with 8-year-old daughter Fannie E. Freeman. All are listed as Black and their post office was Liberty Corner. Reuben was a laborer.¹⁵ William Annin is listed on the next page and his household now included two Black servants Eve and Matilda Van de Veer (ages 21 and 14) and a Black laborer, Henry Johnson, age 14.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY—BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF DEATH.

County: Somerset State of New Jersey—Bureau of Vital Statistics.
 Township: Somerville (If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give the name thereof.)
 City: SOMERVILLE, N. J. (If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give the name thereof.)

FULL NAME OF DECEASED: Reuben Freeman

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

SEX: Male COLOR OR RACE: Colored MARRIAGE: Married
 DATE OF BIRTH: Jan 14 1822 PLACE OF BIRTH: Freehold, N. J.
 AGE: 89 YEARS OF AGE: 89

OCCUPATION: Laborer
 PLACE OF DEATH: Somerville, N. J.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

DATE OF DEATH: Jan 28 1912
 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from 1862-30, 1864, to Jan 27, 1912, and that I last saw deceased on Jan 27, 1912, and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at Somerville, N. J.
 The CAUSE OF DEATH was as follows:
Chronic Nephritis

Physician: W. H. Robeson, M. D.
 Buried: Jan 30, 1912 (Month, Day, Year) Place of Burial: Somerville, N. J.

Funeral Home: Robeson & Co.

After William Annin’s death in 1872, Reuben and “Anna E.” Freeman moved to Annandale, Hunterdon Co., NJ, where Reuben is described as a farm laborer on the 1880 Census. Fannie E. Freeman does not appear in the listing and is thought to have died.¹⁶ Reuben worked for several years during this time as sexton for the Reformed Church in Lebanon.¹⁷

By the 1900 Census, Reuben and Ann are living at 25 Central Avenue in Somerville a modest two-story house that still stands. Reuben was a day laborer and owned the house subject to a mortgage. Both Reuben and Ann could read and write.¹⁸

Reuben died in his home on January 28, 1912 of chronic nephritis (*certificate at left*) and was buried in New Somerville Cemetery.¹⁹ Funeral services were conducted by the Rev. William Robeson of St. Thomas’ A.M.E. Zion Church on Davenport Street in Somerville. Robeson was assisted by the Rev. Charles T. Anderson of Brooklyn.²⁰ Rev. Anderson

was the stepson of William Annin and undoubtedly knew Reuben for much of his life.²¹ Reuben’s wife, Ann E. Freeman, died March 12, 1915 in Somerville.²² She was aged around 80.

¹⁰ NJ County Marriages, 1682-1956, accessed on FamilySearch.org
¹¹ Manumissions of Slaves, 1823-1862, p. 198, Somerset County Clerk’s Office. The Annins were related to the Freeman family by marriage. William Annin’s sister Mary Annin married John Freeman (1804-1868).
¹² John Kirkpatrick of Bernards Township reported a black male child was born in his house of slave parents on Jan. 20, 1824 and named Cuff. Birth Certificates of Children of Slaves, 1805-1830, Somerset Co. Clerk’s Office.
¹³ 1855 NJ State Census, Bernards Twp., Somerset Co., p. 10.
¹⁴ 1860 Census Bernards Twp., Somerset Co., NJ, p. 11.
¹⁵ 1870 U.S. Census, Bernards Twp., Somerset Co., p. 52. FamilySearch.org incorrectly indexes the page as Bergen County.
¹⁶ 1880 Census, Annandale, Hunterdon Co., NJ. ED 81 Page 30B. Ann E. Freeman reported on the 1900 census that she was the mother of one child, but no child was living.
¹⁷ Reuben Freeman obituary, *Courier News*, Jan. 29, 1912, p. 2.
¹⁸ 1900 Census, Bridgewater, Somerville, ED 79, Sheet 6B.
¹⁹ Reuben Freeman death certificate, New Jersey Archives.
²⁰ Reuben Freeman funeral notice, *Courier News*, Jan. 31, 1912, p. 2.
²¹ A social note on the same page as Reuben’s funeral notice, says Rev. C. T. Anderson visited his mother Mrs. Eliza Annin on Mountain Ave. Rev. Anderson was the brother of Somerset County Clerk Alexander G. Anderson.

CROSS ESTATE GARDENS

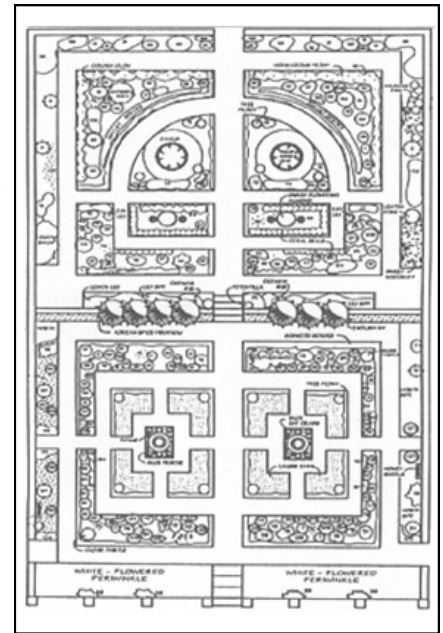
Spring is the perfect time to stroll in a historic garden! The Cross Estate Gardens was designed in the early twentieth century when wealthy and prominent New Yorkers built country mansions in the “Mountain Colony” of Bernardsville.

The original estate, named Queen Anne Farm, was built in 1905 by John Anderson Bensel and his wife Ella Louise Day and included a stately 23-room mansion, carriage house, and a five-story stone water tower.

In 1929, W. Redmond Cross purchased the property and renamed it Hardscrabble House. His wife, Julia Appleton Newbold Cross, was a member of the Royal Horticultural Society for eight years. Mrs. Cross made extensive improvements to the garden with the guidance of Clarence Fowler, a renowned landscape architect. Together they cultivated a unique assortment of plants which comprise formal and native gardens (*design at right*), a wisteria-covered pergola, and a mountain laurel allée.

In 1975, the National Park Service acquired the 162-acre property from the Cross descendants as part of the Morristown National Historical Park. However, sufficient funds were not available to maintain the elaborate two-level walled garden.

Jean Pope, a former Chester resident, began a volunteer project in 1977 to bring the nearly obscured gardens back to life. Paths and walkways were uncovered and runaway vegetation removed, pruned, or replaced. The New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation was formed in 1987 to reestablish and care for the plants. Today, the grounds offer a glimpse into a bygone life-style and stand as a fine example of an English country garden. For more information, tours, and events visit www.crossestategardens.org.



MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

The Board of Trustees extends its sincere gratitude to the following patrons for their generous gifts to the Brick Academy Museum:

- Otto Heizmann Beer Bottle
Gift of Peter Van Slyke, Morristown NJ
- Zip Code 07920 Post Card
Gift of Barbara Perkins, Philadelphia PA
- Collection of title searches and other documents relating to Bernards Township (two boxes) from Palmer Law Offices, Bernardsville
Gift of Peter Palmer, Bernardsville NJ



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Museum Hours:
First Sunday of the Month
2 - 4 PM

Inside the Brick Academy
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The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

*A 501c3 nonprofit organization
founded in 1928*

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