

Inside THE BRICK ACADEMY

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

May 2025



The March to Yorktown Day Panel Discussion and Exhibit

Sunday, June 22 • 1 - 3 PM

Sponsor: THSSH
The Brick Academy
15 West Oak Street
Basking Ridge, NJ

Join us as we celebrate the French-American Alliance and the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail that commemorates the 700 miles of land and water routes followed by the allied Continental and French armies from Newport, RI to Yorktown, VA in 1781. The march, long recognized as a military master stroke under the command of General George Washington and French General Comte de Rochambeau, led to final victory and an end to the long struggle for American independence.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) and the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route New Jersey (W3R-NJ) will host historians Dr. Robert A. Selig and Dr. Robert K. Haberman, who will talk about the allied armies as they marched through the Somerset Hills on their way to Yorktown, VA and the final engagement of the Revolutionary War. First-hand accounts from the journals of Sgt. James Selkirk will put you in the middle of the action!



Fee: \$15 for THSSH members, \$20 for non-members. Cash only at the door.
Online Registration is required. Visit “Programs & Events” on www.thssh.org.

This program is made possible by funds from
the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission,
a partner of the New Jersey Historical Commission.



BERNARDS TOWNSHIP CHARTER DAY

Saturday - May 17 • 12PM to 6PM

This year’s street fair commemorates the granting of a Charter by King George II of England, establishing Bernardston Township in 1760. The charter was in appreciation for the services of Sir Francis Bernard, who was Royal Governor of New Jersey from 1758-1760. Today, Bernards Township comprises Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner, Lyons, and West Millington.



The Historical Society will have a prominent presence near Bishop Janes United Methodist Church on South Finley Avenue as well as welcome visitors to the Brick Academy at 15 West Oak Street from 12PM to 4PM. Museum highlights include “*What Put Somerset Hills on the Map*” - a visual narrative of the five neighboring towns, a temporary exhibit: *The Natirar Estate and Kate Macy Ladd Convalescent Home*, and a circa 1890s schoolroom with potbelly stove, antique desks, and student classwork.

Both locations will highlight the nonprofit 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/>



The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills is a 401c3 nonprofit organization with no paid positions. By contributing their time and talents to assist with our programs and projects, scores of local volunteers, from high school students to retirees keep THSSH operating.

There are many rewarding opportunities in building maintenance, clerical, museum curator, public relations, marketing, and youth education...just to name a few! Personal training will be provided. Volunteer hours are flexible and many current openings require a limited time commitment.

For information, please view our Volunteer Opportunities booklet at www.thssh.org, call 908-221-1770 or email info@THSSH.org to let us know your volunteer preference and we’ll be in touch.

The Historical Society is pleased to announce the following new memberships:

Karen Gallopo	<i>Basking Ridge</i>
Michael Gianetti Jr.	<i>Hillsborough</i>
Doreen Hoch-Beim	<i>Basking Ridge</i>
Roxanne Kolba	<i>Basking Ridge</i>
Elizabeth Ann Lusk	<i>Manasquan</i>
Marissa McDonnell	<i>Mendham</i>
Kathi Paton	<i>Basking Ridge</i>
Nancy Priest and David Rogers	<i>Westfield</i>
Christopher Savacool	<i>Baldwinsville, NY</i>
Susan Steuber	<i>Basking Ridge</i>

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN- THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR HOUSES OF PLUCKEMIN, NJ

Part 3: The McEowen House

By Cynthia Crosson

When the British Army brought America's War for Independence crashing into their tiny village, the residents of Pluckemin, NJ joined the fight. In December 1776, unruly British soldiers on a foraging mission raided the community, plundered homes and ransacked St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The raid did not spare the home of Squire William McEowen, who had a store and commissary for the Continental Army.

The following is an account by Dr. A. W. McDowell, a close associate of Henry Vanderveer:

"At one time, the British Cavalry, after a defeat of our Army, made a raid upon the village, took possession of the store, and carried away all the boots, shoes, clothing, teas, etc. At that time several houses were plundered. Mrs. McEowen took up her floor, concealed her feather beds and other valuables under it, and replaced the carpet. Old Mr. Eoff's fences and rails were burnt. Peter Lane's father was appointed to collect all the pewter plates and dishes, which were much in use in those days, and deposit them at certain recognized places—viz Pluckamin and Larger Cross Roads. They were then melted into bullets to shoot the British. Lead was scarce, and the pewter bullets, run in common moulds, were the substitute."¹



Less than a month later, in January 1777, General Washington and the Continental Army had turned the tide with two surprise victories at Trenton and Princeton. Pluckemin then became one of the most important rest stops of the war for Washington's beleaguered army as it marched to Morristown. Residents of Pluckemin and surrounding areas opened their homes and hearts to support the soldiers and celebrate their victories. (See previous two newsletter stories on the Fenner and Boylan houses).

Squire McEowen's house, which stood on the southeast corner of Pluckemin crossroads², is reputed to be older than the Boylan house or the Fenner houses.³ According to the Somerset County Historical Quarterly, "Mr. John A. Powelson, of Pluckemin, who has given attention to the matter, believes it may have been the first house erected in the village of Pluckemin. There used to be a secret box in the floor of one of the rooms. The oldest resident of the village, Mrs. Ann N. Vanderveer, states she lived in the house when a girl, and it was then 'very old.' The nails in it were all hand-forged."



It turns out that commerce in the Pluckemin area was also conducive to romance during the war. As a merchant and commissary for the army, Squire McEowen often purchased flour in Hunterdon County from Col. John Mehelm at Halls Mills. He married Col. Mehelm's daughter, Jemima.

Travel back and forth to the mills was a slow process. "The flour was loaded on a large wagon and drawn by four yoke of oxen and conveyed to Pluckamin and Morristown...Squire McEowen owned 136 acres of land adjoining his house in 1787. His only daughter married Squire Elias Brown. Squire McEowen died March 10, 1817, in the house where he lived and kept store. He was sixty-one."⁴ His house saw many owners after his death. It fell into disrepair and was finally torn down in 2021.

¹ "Our Home: A Monthly Magazine devoted to Local and General Literature," Vol. I, 1873, p. 438.

² "Bedminster Township 250 Years," Prich Matthews, 1999, p. 27.

³ Somerset County Historical Quarterly, Vol V, p. 234.

⁴ "History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, New Jersey," James P. Snell, 1881, p. 712.

Mine Mount Borough

By Roy Crego

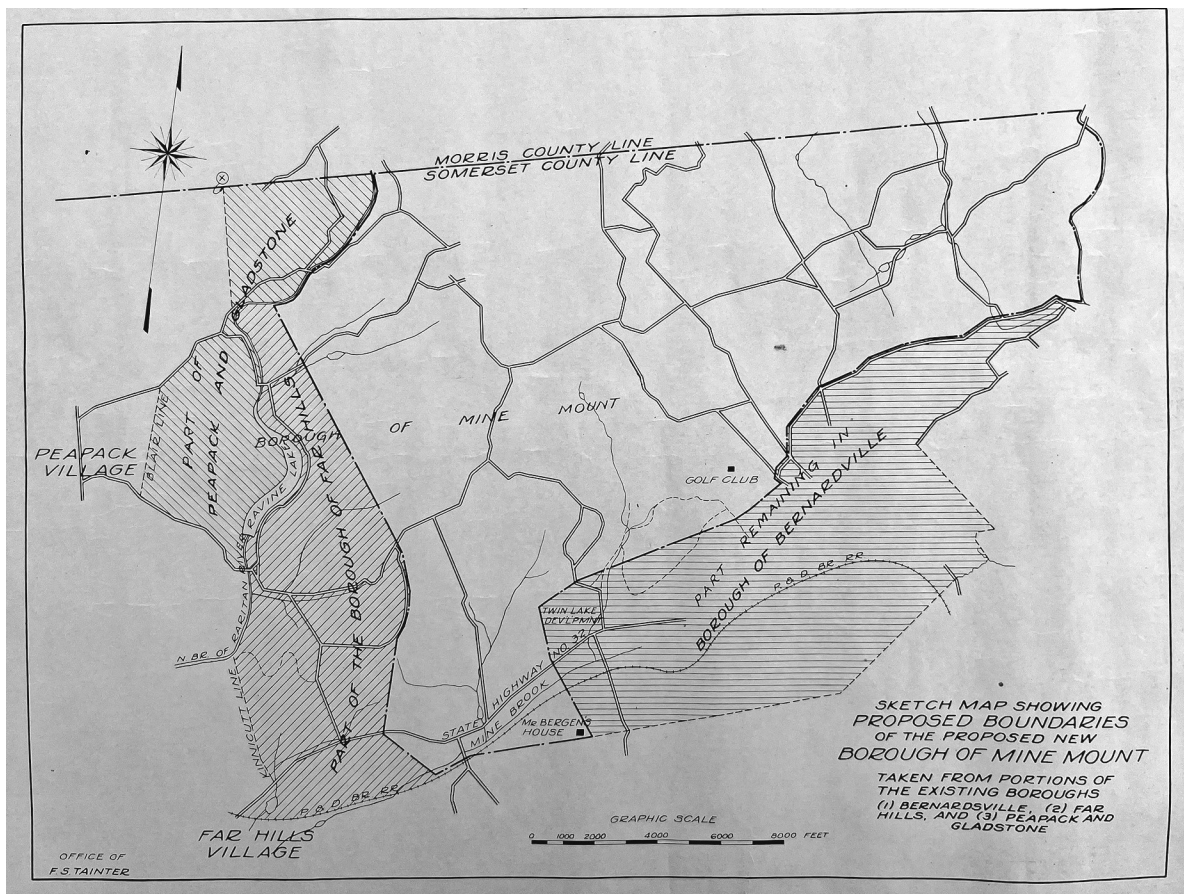
Bernardsville became an independent borough in 1924, but within six years, there was a serious movement to break the borough and others apart. To preserve their estates and lower taxes, wealthy landowners from the “mountain colony” sought to carve the Borough of Mine Mount from the existing boroughs of Bernardsville, Far Hills, and Peapack-Gladstone.

In August 1930, a committee of citizens met to study the project and included Joseph Larocque, chairman; Henry Young, vice-chairman; Catesby L. Jones, secretary; Hon. Ogden H. Hammond, William S. Post, Irving B. Kingsford, Wyllys Terry, Arthur Turnbull, engineer Frank S. Tainter, and Hon. H. Otto Wittpenn.¹

The proposed borough stretched from the Morris County border south to include the Frank Bergen estate on Meeker Rd. To the west, it extended past Ravine Lake almost to Peapack village. The proposal would have stripped the existing boroughs of much of their open land and essential rateables. The proposal received negative reaction from the existing boroughs due to the adverse impact on school systems and sewer projects.² The plan was dubbed “the Millionaire’s Borough.”

A bill for the Borough of Mine Mount was introduced in the State Legislature in February 1931, by State Senator Dryden Kuser. Although his house was in the proposed borough, Kuser did not personally support the measure. The bill never made it out of committee and its supporters quickly abandoned the effort.

Proposed Borough of Mine Mount by Frank S. Tainter, courtesy of Paul Fox, Apgar Associates, Far Hills, NJ



¹ Bernardsville News, Aug. 14, 1930, p. 1.

² Bernardsville News, Jan. 29, 1931, p. 1.



MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

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

- Books, correspondences and photos relating to Blairsden and Blair Family
Melillo Equities, Far Hills, NJ
- Materials and Photos on Peapack-Gladstone from Ruth Thomson estate
W. Barry Thomson, Williamsburg, MA
- Photos of St. Bernard's Episcopal Parish House, Bernardsville, before conversion
Conti Group, New Hope, PA
- Photos of Kiwannis Cottage at Bonnie Brae Farm
Sonia von Heijne, Shenandoah Junction, WV
- McMurtry, Childs, Drake family Photo Albums and Letters
Duncan Knobloch, Glen Gardner, NJ
- 1955 Bernards Township Tax Map
Bernardsville Library Local History Room



THSSH Headquarters:

15 West Oak Street, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920
908.221.1770

Museum Hours:

First Sunday of the Month

Inside the Brick Academy

is a membership benefit posted online and printed editions mailed in Winter, Spring & Fall

Editor: Marcella Miccolis

Website: www.thssh.org
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**The Historical Society
of the Somerset Hills**

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founded in 1928*

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