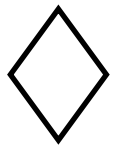


# The General Store



Page 1

NEWSLETTER OF THE RALSTON HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Summer 2021

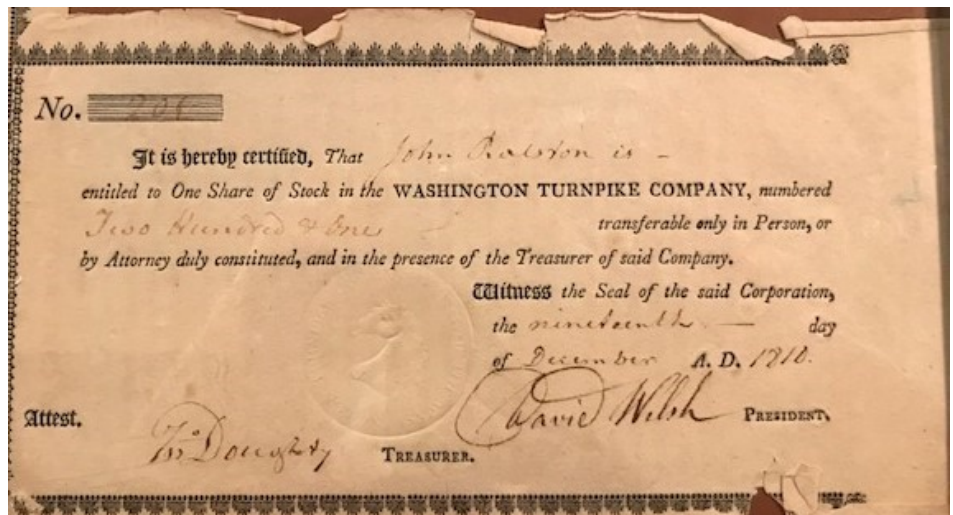
## Which Way to the Washington Turnpike?

*Reprinted from a previous newsletter written  
by Tracy Kinsel*

Directions to the Ralston General Store from Morristown: At the Morristown courthouse, take the Washington Turnpike west to Mendham, continue through Mendham past Ebenezer Byram's Black Horse Tavern, go thence another mile to John Ralston and Hugh Nesbitt's General Store, located at the crossroads near mile marker 8 from Morristown, but before you travel the bridge over the North Branch of the Raritan River.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century these were clear directions you might follow to get to the Ralston General Store. Lest you get lost, today we refer to the Washington Turnpike by several other common names depending on the town and location, all – visible on a current day map: State Route 24, Morris County 510, Washington Street and Mendham Road. The names are now different, but the fact is the main road we travel every day east to west in Mendham and the road that still passes the Ralston General Store was built and operated at one time as a toll road.

According to Munsell's "History of Morris County," in the early nineteenth century both the population and industry in Morris County were growing, and better roads were in demand. Many new business ventures were formed to accommodate this growing need. One of them was the Washington Turnpike Company, chartered by an act of the New Jersey Legislature on March 3, 1806 to build a turnpike from Morristown to Phillipsburg, with a branch to Schooley's Mountain passing by the popular mineral springs on the way to Hackettstown. Dave Welsh, as president, along with several other incorporators, issued subscriptions of 12,000 shares at \$25.00 each to the public to fund the project. The turnpike began by the courthouse or possibly farther west where the current Egbert Avenue intersects Washington Street



Washington Turnpike Company Share owned by John Ralston and recently donated to the RHA by Margery Dixon. 12,000 shares were issued at \$25.00 per share.

opposite Burnham Park in Morristown, and took the following path:

*"It (the Washington Turnpike company) built the road which leaving Morristown by the courthouse, is still the principal road to Mendham; running thence through Chester, by the late General Cooper's Mills (Cooper Grist Mill) to German Valley (Long Valley), and so up Schooley's Mountain, through Springtown to the Mountain hotels, where it branched, the "spur going north to Hackettstown and main line continuing through Pleasant Grove toward Phillipsburg."*

As the name implies, travelers on the Washington Turnpike should bring money, since this is a toll road. According to Harold J. Nunn's "The Story of Hackettstown, New Jersey – 1754 to 1955", which quotes a copy of the original charter kept in Washington, NJ, a printed list of rates was required to be posted at all times as follows:

*"Per each mile traveled: for every carriage,*

*sleigh or sled drawn by beast, ONE CENT. For each additional beast, ONE CENT. For each beast exceeding four, TWO CENTS. For every horse and rider or lead horse or mule, ONE CENT. For every dozen calves, sheep or hogs, FIVE MILLS. For every dozen of horses, mules, or cattle, ONE CENT."*

The charter continues on to cover other important conditions of travel and tries not to restrict business, or inconvenience some aspects of public travel.

*The company shall not demand any toll from persons passing to or from public worship on the Sabbath day, or to or from any mill to which he may resort for the grinding of grain for his family's use. Or for horses, carriages, sleighs or sleds conveying a person to or from a funeral, or any person passing to or from any business on the farm, or any militiaman passing to or from any training on a muster*

## *President's Message*

### 2021 MARKS the 80<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RALSTON HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Throughout the summer, the small group of trustees have been very busy preparing the General Store Museum for our new season of visitors. We began the weekend before the Fourth of July holiday by opening, cleaning, and organizing the Museum after having been closed for a year. We even had a couple of visitors stop in while we were preparing for our grand reopening on the following weekend.

We exhibited at the Brookside Parade on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and handed out postcards, posters, and information about the General Store Museum, our "local treasure" as so many people have referred to it. We encouraged individuals who stopped by to join with us in keeping history alive here in Ralston and support our efforts through monetary donations, by joining the Ralston Historical Association, and/or by helping occasionally with special activities sponsored by the group. We need all of you to make this happen!

We held the grand reopening of the Museum on the Fourth of July weekend. The Museum was opened on Sunday and Monday from 2-5 PM. We welcomed 42 visitors during the weekend, most of whom had never visited the General Store Museum. Refreshments were served and free postcards, posters, and flags were given to our visitors. We the Trustees, though small in number, are very excited about sharing our local history with others. We have been very encouraged by the positive responses we had from many of the individuals we met at the parade and at the opening days of this season. Many expressed an interest in helping in some way to keep history alive in Ralston for the generations to come.

We have also worked for the past month organizing and preparing scrapbooks and photo albums containing news articles (covering the last 300 years), old postcards, and old photos. We are now working on a

scrapbook highlighting special events in the history of the Ralston Historical Association, as we celebrate our 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an association. We are in the process of setting up a new display, "Crafting, Clothing, Cooking" Early American Life in the Home. Plans are being made to republish the book by Ella Mockridge entitled Our Mendham. The book will be on sale in the General Store Museum on a future date. Planning and designing a float for the Mendham Labor Day Parade is also on our agenda.

Now if I might just share some of our history with you! Eighty years ago, in order to save the General Store/Post Office from collapse and possibly even demolition, in September 1941, a group of concerned citizens then known as the "Ralstonites" from the Ralston area of Mendham Township, composed a document proposing the following:

*"The undersigned propose to form a corporation for the purpose of taking title to the property, repairing it and managing it."\**

Thus, the beginning of the Ralston Historical Association. They collected contributions to purchase the General Store and Post Office property for \$400.

*"The terms of the proposed purchase will require that the building be repaired and used as a post office or as a historical site under penalty of reversion to the then owners of the De-Mott property. It is expected that the purchase price, legal fees, and cost renovation will not exceed approximately \$1,500."\**

In addition to collecting donations, this group also encouraged those who were unable to make a monetary donation at this time, to contribute in other ways.

*"It has also been suggested that arrangements be made so that those who cannot make cash contributions may contribute labor or materials."\**

History repeats itself! Today we are again asking you to join us in preserving our local history through donations of money and as importantly your time. As stated in one of our previous newsletters, "When you volunteer, you give back to the community by helping to preserve the Ralston General Store Museum, a local national treasure. What you may not realize is that volunteering also benefits you! You can make new friends, enrich your knowledge of our local history, and feel good that you've made a difference."

Please join us as we celebrate our 80<sup>th</sup> year as a community organization striving to keep history alive for this generation and those generations to come.

We would love for you to complete the survey at the back of this newsletter and let us know how you can help. Please join us at our Annual Meeting at 2:00 PM on October 10<sup>th</sup> at the General Store Museum.

*Anne Marie Hornyak*

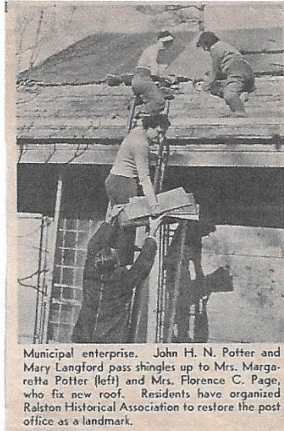
President-Ralston Historical Association

\*These quotations were taken from the original document signed by the Ralstonites in 1941. You may view this important document in its entirety in the scrapbook found in the General Store Museum.



"Rock-a-Bye Baby," but not the Railroad.

## Ralston Historical Association Through the Years 1941-2021



Municipal enterprise. John H. N. Potter and Mary Langford pass shingles up to Mrs. Margaretta Potter (left) and Mrs. Florence C. Page, who fix new roof. Residents have organized Ralston Historical Association to restore the post office as a landmark.



Opening of the General Store Museum in 1964



Wilma Sagurton  
Special Display Horns  
O'Plenty (1990)



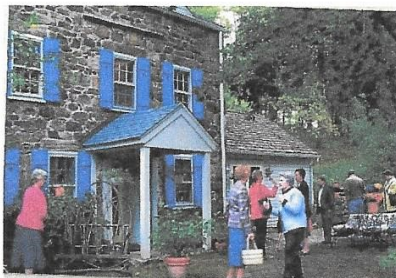
1992 First House Tour

RHA Members at the General Store  
Ed Clauss, Rose Carlin, Marge Davidson,  
Kate Emmons, Wilma Sagurton



2003

Tracy Kinsel, President of the RHA, presents  
Catherine Emmons with a resolution of thanks  
for her 39 years of service.



Second House Tour (2005)  
Bank House on Ironia Road



Pat Rhodes and Jeff Purcell work  
together to organize and clean the  
Museum for the new season (2014)



50th Anniversary Celebration  
of the opening of the General Store  
Museum (2014)



Colonial Crafts and  
Stories at the  
General Store  
Museum (2017)  
Cornhusk dolls,  
needlepoint,  
whirligigs



AnneMarie Hornyak and  
Cathy Nodoro review the  
newly designed scrapbook  
covering almost 250 years  
of The General Store  
History (2021)

## FROM THE COLLECTION

### Sugar Nipper



Until Victorian inventors figured out a way to get sugar to the grocer's shop in ready-to-use granulated form, it was always transported in large cone-shaped sugar loaves. Households could buy a whole sugar loaf or a lump broken off and sold by weight. But then what? How did people prepare it for kitchen and dining table? Sugar nippers were an important part of the answer.

Sugar nippers were basic household tools, but before using them you would probably cut the hard whitish cone into smaller chunks with a hammer and chisel. The nippers were sometimes on a stand so you could put all your strength into forcing the cutting blades through the pieces of sugar-loaf. If they had no stand, the better ones had a piece that stuck out at right angles and was used to steady the sugar nippers against the edge of the kitchen table, while you gripped and squeezed.

This was heavy work, producing lumps and crumbs that could be used in the kitchen. For the dining-room and tea table you needed to nip the sugar into neat lumps. This was sometimes seen as a job for the mistress of the house, especially before 1800 when refined sugar was expensive and often kept in locked boxes, like precious tea leaves in lockable tea caddies.

## RHA—Annual Meeting

**October 10, 2021**

**2:00 PM**

**Ralston General Store**

## Turnpike—continued

*day appointed by law."*

All-important exceptions considering John Ralston owned a Grist-mill across the street from the General Store.

According to the book, "The Mendhams," John Ralston had a reputation for investing generously in local property and business ventures, in addition to his share in the General Store, he also owned several shares in the Washington Turnpike Company. Shares No. 214 and 215 were purchased by John Ralston in 1810 and were recently donated to the Ralston Historical Association by Margaret Dixon, a descendant of the Nesbitt family. One can notice the raised seal of the Washington Turnpike company on this share containing the bust of a horse.

It is not known if John Ralston ever profited from this investment; however in 1823 the property of the Washington Turnpike Company was sold at sheriff sale to James Wood, indicating the company had its share of financial problems and not unlike current day turnpikes. According to Wheaton J. Lane's "From Indian Trail to Iron Horse," by the 1830s, the days of turnpike construction were over due to competition from railroads, canals and the public's resistance to paying tolls, as indicated by the creation of several shunpikes along the main road. It is not known exactly when the Washington Turnpike ceased to be a toll road, but by 1897 the New Jersey Legislature passed an act that allowed the buyout of many of the turnpike companies in New Jersey, thus making the roads free to the public.



RHA President AnneMarie Hornyak welcomes visitors to the General Store Museum in period costume.

## RALSTON HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERS—2020—2021

### JOHN RALSTON SOCIETY

1772 Foundation  
John Paul and Jacelyn Botti  
Beirne Donaldson and Wood  
Huntley  
Sara Dean Link  
\*\*Ralph and Pat Rhodes  
\*\*Dr. Michael Stewart and  
Victoria Chanliecco

### LIFE MEMBERS

Scott Adams  
Debbi and Ed Appel  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Appleby  
Robert and Carla Barone  
James and Patricia Barry  
Michael and Denise Brandes  
Ernest and Debra Brito  
Mrs. Wilson Britten  
\*\*Van Buchanan  
William and Laurie Burke  
Jane Carotenuto  
Robert and Frances Cavallero  
Edward Clauss  
Judy and John Craig  
Tom and Kathy Day  
\*\*Anne Delaney and Chip Carver  
Augie and Diane Corsico  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Devine  
Mr. and Mrs. John Drzik  
\*\*John Eade and Deborah  
Schmerier  
\*\*Don Eberhart  
Isabelle and Algernon Ellien  
Mr. B. Danforth Ely  
Mr. Louis Farrelly  
April Fey

Matthew and Teresa Finlay  
Phyllis and Ken Florek  
Mr. Sam Fornaro  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Fox  
Steven and Elizabeth Freeman  
Mrs. Robert Gates  
\*Mark Goggin  
Joan and Gerald Gorman  
Leslie Goryeb  
Mr. and Mrs. Sorer Haagenzen  
\*\*Anne Marie Hornyak  
Celia C. Ilacqua  
Jane Jenkins  
George and Linda Johnson  
James and Theresa Julian  
Jonathan and Kori Kalafer  
\*Mr. Alan L. Kenwood  
\*\*Tracy and Jamie Kinsel  
Mrs. David Knoop  
Joseph and Christine Laird  
\*Kristine Lamb  
William and Karen Linden  
Sarah Dean Link  
\*\*Gloria and Patrick Lonergan  
Dominick and Heather  
Lovecchio  
Ms. Valerie D. Lyle  
Elisabeth H. MacDonald  
Jane MacNeil  
James and Kathleen McAnally  
Robert Meyer  
Michael and Hilary Merritt  
Joan Shearer Miller  
Linda and William Moran  
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mulcahy  
Raymond and Nancy  
Nadaskay

Cathy Nodoro  
John J. Nosta  
Wenda Oddsen Monger  
Laurence Orloff and Deanne  
Wilson  
Margaret Parker  
Mrs. Robert Pierson  
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Porto  
Thomas and Carol Pugsley  
Mr. Robert J. Purcell  
Edward and Rhoda Radke  
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Rainis  
Bierce Riley  
Donald and Mary Robertson  
Roxiticus Fund  
Julie A. Rubinfeld  
JoEllen Rubolotta  
Celia Rulle  
Inge Schnee  
Glenn Schulte  
Janet M. Schurter  
Diane and Eugene Scolamiero  
Darby Anne Scott  
Mark and Linda Sharland  
Charles A. Shiolen  
Valerie Sinclair  
Hugh and Joy Smith  
Kevin and Dawn Smith  
Klaus and Ella Steiner  
Michael S. Stewart  
Richard and Alison Stewart  
Al and Peggy Storer  
Brian and Mary Ann Storms  
Ms. Henrietta S. Thomas  
Mr. and Mrs. John Thompson  
William F. Thompson  
\*Sam and Diane Tolley

Connie Vanacore  
Carolyn Nesbitt Wagenseller  
Benjamin R. Weber  
Mr. Alan Willemsen  
\*\*Mr. and Mrs. H. Wilmerding  
John and Nancy Wilson  
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Yamashita  
Mary K. Young  
James Zemaitis  
Faith Zimmer  
\*Patricia Zimmerman

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Brian Boden  
Amalia Duarte  
\*J. Allan Phillips

### FAMILY/INSTITUTIONS

Bailey Funeral Home  
John P. Drzik and Ann L. Thorsell  
Mr. Stephen Fogle  
Mr. and Mrs. David Hinkley  
William and Karen Linden

### SENIOR CITIZEN MEMBERS

Alice Dannenbaum  
Sante D'Emidio  
Jean Gruntals  
William Maurer  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Szoke

\* Building Fund Contributor  
\*\* Sustaining Member

### Please take a few minutes and respond to the survey below.

Have you or your family visited the museum in the past four years?	YES	NO
Would you like to receive the newsletter annually?	YES	NO
Is Sundays from 2:00-5:00 PM a good time for visiting the Museum?	YES	NO
Have you attended any of the tours sponsored by the RHA?	YES	NO
Do you own an historic house in Ralston?	YES	NO
Would you be willing to open your home to a Ralston House Tour?	YES	NO
Would you be interested in serving as a trustee of the RHA?	YES	NO
Would you be interested in helping on occasion with special activities conducted by the RHA?	YES	NO

Please add your comments below:



Niddy Noddy—How was the above device used in the Early American Home?

**Ralston Historical Association**  
**313 Mendham Road West**  
**Mendham, NJ 07945**



**Ralston Historical Association**

*Established in 1941*

President—AnneMarie Hornyak  
Vice President/Treasurer—Jeff Purcell  
Secretary—Cathy Nodoro

**Trustees**

Janice Backer  
Kris Lamb  
Pat Rhodes

**Visit our website: [www.ralstonmuseum.org](http://www.ralstonmuseum.org)**

**2021—2022 Membership Renewal Form**

Please indicate your membership information

New Member \_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_ Matching Gift \_\_\_

John Ralston Society (\$1,000.00 one time)

Life Member (\$250.00 one time)

Sustaining Member (\$100.00 per year)

Family/Institution Member (\$40.00 per year)

Individual Member (\$25.00 per year)

Senior Citizen (\$15.00 per year)

Building/Collections Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

The Ralston Historical Association is always looking for volunteers to help in a variety of ways. If interested, please include your name and phone number below or send an email to [rjp543@verizon.net](mailto:rjp543@verizon.net).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

RHA is a 501(c)3 organization. Please make your tax deductible check payable to:

Ralston Historical Association  
313 Mendham Road West  
Mendham, NJ 07945

**Please include your email address if you would like a receipt.**