

THE GENERAL STORE



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NEWSLETTER OF THE RALSTON HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 2007

Mendham Dod Instrument on Display

We are pleased to announce that, thanks to significant contributions to our Collections Fund, we were able to purchase the rare Dod instrument made by S[tephen] & D[aniel] Dod of Mendham. We used a portion of a generous donation from the 1772 Foundation to have the instrument framed.

The instrument is a brass protracting parallel rule, a multi-purpose drafting instrument that includes scales showing every inch and half-inch, with transversal interpolation grids. S-shaped hinges provide parallel rule motion to a second rule, which carries the semi-circular protractor, divided every degree and mounted with the index arm.

Lebbeus Dod [1739-1816] established an armory for the manufacture and repair of muskets after serving
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New Season for General Store Museum

The 2007 museum season began on May 27th and will continue through mid-October. The museum is open on Sundays and holidays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The museum docent is Paula Duer.

RHA Annual Meeting

Please join us for the Annual Meeting of the Ralston Historical Association which will be held at 1 pm on Sunday, July 8 at the General Store which is on Rt. 24 at the intersection of Roxiticus Road. Trustees and officers will be elected and a review of last year's accomplishments and plans for this year will be discussed. The trustees nominated for re-election from this year's Class of 2007 are Wilma Sagurton, Margaret Hogan and Valerie Horowitz.

Mendham Township Loses 2 Historic Houses



Demolition of the Cocran House on Tingley Road

Preservation New Jersey just released its annual list of New Jersey's Ten Most Endangered Historic Sites. The list for 2007 includes locations in Bergen, Burlington, Hunterdon, Mercer, Monmouth, Passaic, Somerset and Sussex counties. None in Morris County. None in Mendham. Morris County recently released its annual list of the 10 Most Endangered Historic Sites. Even though they are not on the PNJ or Morris County lists, in the past year we have lost two historic houses in the township.

Bills Offer Hope for Historic Homes, Page 3

The first house demolished this year is on Tingley Road, the Cocran House. According to the 1986 Morris County Cultural Resources Survey:

A house stood on this site as early as 1853, owned by the Cocran (Cochran) family. In 1868, according to Beer's Atlas of Morris County, Alex Cocran owned a house here. Robinson's Atlas of 1887 indicates the property was owned by Mrs. A. Cocran, probably Alex's widow.

The second house demolished this year is on East Main Street in Brookside, the Brookside Double House. Again according to the 1986 Morris County Cultural Resources Survey:

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Ralston Bids Farewell to Rose and Owen Carlin



Rose and Owen Carlin

Twenty-two years ago Owen and Rose Carlin were attracted to the lushness of the Mendham countryside. It seems fitting that they leave us in a season when this rich foliage is at its peak. Owen and Rose are beginning a new chapter in their lives with a move to Leland, North Carolina. They will soon reside 15 minutes away from their son Tom, Susanna, his wife and, of course, the grandchildren, Luke and Isabel.

They came from Norwalk, Connecticut when Tom was a junior and daughter Jeanette a freshman in high school. It was Tom's involvement in scouting that brought Owen and Rose to the Ralston Historical Association. Tom's Eagle Scout project was repainting the front of the General Store. Owen and Rose met the Association's members and soon were solicited to become trustees. They have served the community as trustees since 1989. Rose has been corresponding secretary and Owen has been in charge of maintenance and preservation. Their dedication and hard work is appreciated by all the Association members.

When asked what memories of Mendham will they take with them, Owen replied his orchard, tennis court and India Brook. They both commented on the open door policy of their backyard tennis court and the many friendships developed there. The Ralston Historical Association's activities and sprucing up the General Store were among their memories.

The Association will remember the promptness and eloquence of Rose's correspondence, the preciseness of Owen's plans and of course the apple cider at our meetings. We wish the Carlins health and happiness in their new home.

Dod Instrument

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as Captain of the artillery under George Washington, who detached him from active duty to develop the armory. Prior to the war he had been well-established as a clock-maker, surveyor and mathematical instrument maker. His sons Stephen [1770-1855], Daniel [1778-1823] and Abner [1772-1847] carried on his business, and also worked as gunsmiths.

The house where the Dod family lived is located on W. Main Street in Mendham Borough, opposite West Field and signified by a red Morris County Heritage Commission sign in the front yard.

The instrument has been expertly mounted and is now on display in the General Store. Please stop in and see this marvelous piece of Mendham history.

Ralston Cider Mill Tragedy

From The Newark News, February 4, 1930:

Whirled to Death in Cider Mill Machinery

Mendham--Dragged into the machinery of his cider mill when his clothing caught in a revolving shaft yesterday Geroge Dubucs, fifty years old, who operated the old McLoughlin distillery at Ralston, Mendham Township, was found dead some time later by his wife. Dubucs's body was still being whirled by the shaft when his wife made the discovery and she was unable to turn off the power.

Mrs. Dubucs rushed to the street and stopped a passing motorist, Thomas Halsey of Ralston who succeeded in stopping the press. Dubucs's body was badly mangled.

Coroner Thomas Lewis of Boonton and Trooper Carmody of the Morristown state police barracks were summoned. It is believed that when Dubucs started the press a pocket of a sweater he was wearing caught in the shaft. The man lived on the property on which the mill is located. Besides his wife, he leaves a married daughter living in Irvington.

Bills Offer Hope for Historic Homes

Much in the news lately because of its link to the sale of state assets being considered by Governor Corzine's office, renewal of the **Garden State Preservation Trust/NJ Historic Trust bill** is before the New Jersey Senate at this time. This legislation has made New Jersey a leader in the preservation of open space and historic sites. Roughly half of the states in this country have enacted similar bills, many taking the form of the very successful federal income tax credit for historic preservation contained in Section 47 of the Internal Revenue Code. It is very important that this bill is renewed and strengthened so that New Jersey can maintain its role as a model for preservation and open space.

A tax credit for the renovation of historic homes...

The **NJ Historic Tax Credit bill, Historic Properties Revitalization Act (A896, S2030)** is waiting for approval in both chambers of the NJ Legislature after passing the Senate Budget Committee unanimously. The HPRRA would provide homeowners or corporations with a tax credit for renovation of historic properties. A credit against his/her personal income tax would be allowed or a business would be allowed a credit against its corporate business tax of 25 percent of the costs of a completed rehabilitation. The project must be considered a substantial rehabilitation.

While homes that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places do of course qualify, homes that lie within locally designated historic districts that contribute to the district's importance are eligible to be certified by the State Historic Preservation Office. The program would be administered by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office.

Mendham Township Loses 2 Historic Houses

(continued from page 1)

One of only two surviving double houses in Mendham, this is a relic of the 19th century "industrial" heyday of Brookside.

Sadly both of these houses will not be included in the current revised Morris County Cultural Resources Survey now taking place and later to be published by the County. Both houses were demolished to make way for the newer larger and more modern structures of our time.

Catherine Emmons

Catherine Emmons, a past President and Trustee Emeritus of the Ralston Historical Association died on Tuesday, May 15, 2007 at Holly Manor Nursing Home. She was 97. Kate was a longtime member of the RHA and was also active in the Mendham Borough Historical Society. She moved to Mendham in 1914 with her family and worked for 44 years at Robinson's Drug Shop before retiring in 1973. She served as grand marshal of the Mendham Labor Day parade several times and was honored by borough officials in August 2006, when they held a Catherine Emmons Day. Her book, *Through the Years in Mendham Borough* contains pictures and other information about the Borough from its beginning in 1906.



Tracy Kinsel presents Kate Emmons with a plaque naming her a Ralston Historical Association Trustee Emeritus in 2004.

Please contact Governor Corzine and your state legislators and voice your support of historic preservation in New Jersey:

Governor Jon Corzine

Office of the Governor, PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625 (609)-292-6000

Senator Anthony R. Bucco

75 Bloomfield Ave., 3rd Floor, Denville, NJ 07834 (973)-627-9700

Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll

20 South St., Suite 2B, Morristown, NJ 07960 (973)-539-8113

Assemblyman Richard A. Merkt

12 Old Brookside Rd., Randolph, NJ 07869 (973)-895-9100

See www.preservationnj.org for further information.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JEFF PURCELL



I am very pleased to announce that the Association has purchased the Dod Instrument, a pair of brass rulers and attached protractor from Wilma Sagurton by using the funds collected from our members. The Dod instrument was made in Mendham by brothers Stephen and Daniel. More information about this unique antiquity can be found on page 1 of this newsletter.

During the past year, the Ralston General Store had 165 visitors and we collected close to \$250 from donations and the purchase of merchandise, mostly books about Mendham and the Rock-a-bye Railroad. We were thrilled to receive a \$5,000 donation from the 1772 Foundation. A portion of the gift was used to display the Dod instrument. The trustees are in the process of deciding what would be best to do with the remainder of the award. Top on our list of priorities is new interior lighting for the General Store's display. We've contacted the firm that did the lighting for the Museum of Early Trades in Madison to see what would work best in our museum. We're also considering republishing the book written by Ella Mockridge, *Our Mendham*.

Maintenance on the general store continues and the trustees will greatly miss the efforts of Owen Carlin who is relocating to North Carolina with his wife Rose. Before he left, Owen washed the front of the store to remove the mold and he applied a coat of sealer afterwards. If anyone would be interested in helping us with the maintenance of the general store, please send an email to pfr14@aol.com or give me a call at 973-543-7834.

This year's special exhibit is entitled "Early Lighting" and I can promise you that you will never see as extensive a collection as has been assembled by Wilma Sagurton. Please be sure to ask our docent, Paula Duer, about the many pieces on display. As usual, the museum opens on Memorial Day weekend and will continue through mid-October.

And just a correction from my message in last year's newsletter – The Mendham Village Flower Shop is still very much in business and has been for over 30 years. Congratulations to them!

FROM THE COLLECTION

Rush Light Holder



One of the most unusual and finely crafted items in the General Store is this rush light holder. As part of our Early Lighting special display, it seems only appropriate that we feature this item.

Rushes are long-stemmed plants that are found in wet marshy ground and were abundant in this area years ago. Rushes were picked in the summer to make into rush lights for the dark winter evenings. After picking, the rushes were soaked in a nearby stream to make them soft and then they were peeled. A sharp fingernail was used to cut up the side of the rush and the white pith in the center was pulled out.

Fat from bacon, beef or mutton was melted in a grease pan near a fire. Then the peeled rushes were pulled through the melted fat. The rushes were gripped in a special rush light holder at a 45°

angle like this small one in our collection. They could give only a weak light and they did not take long to burn to the end - lasting just long enough to perform a simple task. Rush lights could be lit at both ends to give more light, but they would then burn up much more quickly.

RALSTON HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION 2006-2007

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1772 Foundation

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* Additional contribution

Ralston Historical Association
313 Mendham Road West
Mendham, NJ 07945

stamp



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Established in 1941

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Vice President – *Tracy Kinsel*
Recording Secretary – *Wilma Sagurton*
Corresponding Secretary – *Rose Carlin*
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Visit our website: www.ralstonmuseum.org

A large print version of this newsletter is available by calling 973-543-7834

2007– 2008 Membership Renewal Form

Check the Appropriate Membership

Please indicate your membership information

New Member _____ Renewal _____ Corporate/Matching Gift _____

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

_____ Life Member (\$250.00 one time)

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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 rjp13@patmedia.net.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Please make your tax deductible check payable to:

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