



Volume 11 , Issue 1

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Summer 2009



First Middlebrook Encampment

SUNDAY SERIES LUNCHEON/LECTURE

Maxine N. Lurie, Ph.D.

Guest Lecturer
Professor, History Department
Seton Hall University
South Orange, New Jersey

“THE U.S. CONSTITUTION, William Paterson and the New Jersey Plan”

Sunday, September 20, 2009 from 1:30-3:00 PM

At Historic Colonial Farms

The Loft

(No wheel chair access available.)

O'Connor's Beef' N Chowder House

1719 Amwell Road (Route 514)
Somerset, NJ 08873

www.oconnorsbeef.com

Professor Maxine N. Lurie is co-author of **THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF NEW JERSEY** and contributing writer to **NEW JERSEY AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** by Barbara Mitnick. The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance is offering this lecture during the annual celebration of “**Constitution Week**” by the Daughters of the American Revolution nationally.

The Sunday Luncheon menu includes a choice of Chicken Francaise, Beer Battered Cod or Beef Medallions with Mushroom Gravy plus a Tossed Garden Salad, Freshly Baked Bread, Seasonal Vegetable and Starch and includes Ice Cream Sundae, Soda and Coffee.

Reservations are required. The inclusive luncheon/lecture cost is \$30.00 per person. To reserve call Elyce Jennings after September 9 (but before September 15) at 732-463-0767 and mail your check payable to RMHA % Mrs. Elyce M. Jennings, 851 River Road, Piscataway, NJ 08854.

UPCOMING SCHEDULED MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Alliance Sites are encouraged to
Send their representative**

Thursday
September 17, 2009
FROM 1:30-3:00 PM

The Perth Amboy Ferry Slip Museum
Foot of Smith Street at
Corner Of Front Street
Perth Amboy, NJ

Speaker:

Kathleen Manning DePow,

RMHA Director &
Museum Coordinator

Followed by a tour of
This Maritime Museum



The Perth Amboy-Tottenville Ferry Slip dates from 1863 and was restored in 1998 to its 1904 appearance. A replica of the ticket office has been constructed and is used as the Perth Amboy Welcome Center. Ferry service from Perth Amboy to Staten Island dates from 1684 when the likes of the Lenape Indians and Benjamin Franklin used its service to traverse the Arthur Kill.

**Raritan-Millstone Heritage
Alliance**

P. O. Box 5583
Somerset, N.J. 08875-5583

*An organization of individuals,
organizations and sites
working to promote preservation and understanding of
the rich eventful and cultural heritage
of significant historical, educational and cultural sites
located in Central New Jersey*

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The Board of Directors meets the third Thursday of March,,
May, September, October and November at
Designated historic and museum member sites.

YOUR LINK TO THE PUBLIC: The Link is on a quarterly publication schedule. News of major upcoming events for possible placement in the newsletter may be mailed, emailed or faxed to the following address. Any questions, please contact: Donald J. Peck, Editor, The Clausen Company, P.O.Box 140, Fords, NJ 088 63 or phone 732-738-1165, fax 732-738-1618, or E-mail clausenco@aol.com.

The View From Washington Rock *by Donald Johnstone Peck*

It was Flag Day, June 14, 2009 and a lovely day for a drive to Washington Rock (544 alt.), at Washington Rock State Park in the Township of Green Brook. On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress adopted our national colors. As Washington's army encamped at nearby Middlebrook from May 28 to July 2, 1777, there was, tradition says, sufficient time for an official flag to have been brought here from Philadelphia. The Middlebrook Encampment thus had the first opportunity to fly the Stars and Stripes over George Washington's Headquarters. Today you can visit Washington's First Middlebrook Encampment site on Middlebrook Road in Bridgewater and see the Thirteen Stars and Stripes flying there.

Spies had informed Washington that General Howe intended to capture the American capital at Philadelphia and to cut off and isolate the southern colonies. In June, 1777, from Washington Rock Washington could see the movements of the British marching some 4000 troops from occupied New Brunswick, the British Field Headquarters, and another 13,000 coming to meet them from Perth Amboy, the Colonial Capital, both strongholds of the British troops in New Jersey in 1777. George Washington certainly must have been a very positive person. For here in Central New Jersey, with limited resources and troops, he took on the world's most powerful empire and faced many grim and anxious moments with amazing courage and purpose.

Visitors marvel at the view that Washington also saw from Washington Rock. From it one can see distant views of the areas so many of the historic sites of Middlesex and Somerset Counties listed in the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance's **GUIDE TO HISTORIC SITES IN CENTRAL NEW JERSEY**. Situated on First Mountain of the Watchungs, the Lenni Lenape

American Natives called these "Blue Hills" Watchungs meaning "High Hills." The basalt rock, which forms the Watchungs, is part of a continuous lava flow extending from the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia to Northern Florida.

During the Jurassic Period, New Jersey lay near the center of the super-continent of Pangaea that contained all of North and South America, Europe and Africa. As Pangaea began to split apart, massive flows of basalt lava occurred. Dating and chemical analyses of volcanic eruptions of lava flows in Morocco's Atlas Mountains have shown a striking match between the timetable of eruptions there and those of North America as the continents split apart 360 to 400 million years ago.

On that warm June 14 Sunday afternoon at Washington Rock, with the sun streaming through an occasional cloud, it seemed that one could see forever. There was New York City, Staten Island, Raritan Bay, and Sandy Hook. From this 30-mile panoramic view one can see the long ridge of the Atlantic Highlands in Monmouth County (the highest elevations on the Atlantic coast between Maine and Florida) separating New Jersey's inner and outer coastal plains.

Here in that view of that wide expanse of New Jersey's Piedmont Plateau that lay before us, the first European settlers of the Jersey Midlands arrived, inheritors of a struggling merchant tradition which had been set in motion as early as 1498 when John Cabot had sighted the Jersey coast for his King, Henry VII of England. Explorers Verrazano and Gomez followed Cabot. But it is Henry Hudson's first landing on September 4, 1609, at Sandy Hook, of which we have Hudson's landing record 400 years ago this year.

Looking out from Washington

Rock the visitor can see the great Raritan River and its tributaries, named by the Raritans, a tribe of the Lenni Lenape. First explored by Europeans in the 1500s, from its headwaters in Budd Lake at an elevation of 940 feet, it flows some 85 miles through the Highlands, Piedmont and coastal Plain provinces of north-central New Jersey until it empties into Raritan Bay. The Raritan River drains over one thousand square miles of fertile valleys of the Garden State. By 1750 New Jersey was well known for its produce flowing to and through the port cities of New York and Philadelphia. Already it was being called "The Garden" of the colonies.

New Jersey was also the territory traversed by the British and Americans for a third of the revolution. Here they foraged from local farmers for both themselves and their animals. Hay, oats, Indian corn, cattle and horses disappeared in the twinkling of an eye whenever raiders appeared. Families were insulted, stripped of their beds and other furniture, even of their wearing apparel. Wives and daughters were ravished. Rare was the slave who was not seized. The most battered of the Thirteen Colonies, the "Garden" Colony would see the most raids and counter raids. Loyalists would raid patriot farms and patriots would seek revenge against neighbors who supported the King.

Just as it is for us today, this historic landscape and spectacular and distinctive topography and the strategic location of Washington Rock made it a valuable lookout point for George Washington during the First Middlebrook Encampment in June, 1777 and the Battle of the Short Hills, June 26, 1777. It was also pivotal to winning the events of the Second Middlebrook Encampment (1778-79), and indeed some would argue, to winning the war itself

RARITAN MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE

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Thank you!

Visit our website: raritanmillstone.org

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance consists of committed individuals and organizations representing sites within the region of Raritan and Millstone systems. In an area that has continually contributed to the strength of the United States, we seek through our programs to promote, protect and preserve an understanding of our rich historical, cultural and educational heritage as we work to be a model for current and future generations by promoting the rich heritage of our American society.



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