



Volume 27, Issue 4

The Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance

Summer, 2023

THE RMHA TO MAKE THEIR FIRST VISIT TO
**MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH/STOUTSBURG-SOURLAND
 AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM**

189 Hollow Road, Skillman, NJ

With summer's end almost in sight, the RMHA is pleased to announce that it will hold an early Fall board meeting, Saturday, September 16, 2023, at 10 a.m. at the historic Mount Zion AME Church/Stoutsburg-Sourland African American Museum. (Page 148 in the "Fifth Edition" of the HISTORIC SITES IN THE RARITAN & MILLSTONE VALLEYS). This church/museum is listed on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Donnetta Johnson is the Executive Director. info@ssamuseum.org Following the business meeting, there will be a docent talk and guided tour of the museum, parsonage and grounds.

SSAAM was founded by historians Elaine Buck and Beverly Mills, whose 2018 book *If These Stones Could Talk* chronicles the history of the African American presence in the Sourland Mountain region. The museum emerged from a partnership between the Stoutsburg Cemetery Association and the Sourland Conservancy.

The Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was established in 1866 by African American residents, the descendants of both free and enslaved people, of the Sourland Mountain area. The church was originally located in Zion, New Jersey. Built in the Skillman section of Montgomery Township, the current structure, built in 1899-1902, is a small, modest, one-room, rural black church. The church was home to an active congregation until 2005, when it stopped holding services. From the 19th century until the 1930s, this church organized "camp meetings" each summer to benefit the local community. These events included sermons, singing and food. It represents the evolution of African American heritage in the Sourlands region of central New Jersey including its unique culture, experiences and contributions.

Following the gradual emancipation of New Jersey's slaves beginning in 1804, the Sourlands attracted a free black population that lived on the edges of New Jersey's economy. They worked on small farms, orchards, quarries, potteries and sawmills. From the 1860s to the early 1900s, the Sourlands supported a thriving peach industry with African Americans becoming known for weaving peach baskets and providing farm labor. Blight crippled the peach industry which eventually led to the abandonment of orchards. An outward migration took place as the population moved off to towns and cities in search of work.

A diminishing number of African American families persisted in carrying out rural traditions, much of them centered about activities at Mount Zion AME, which played a pivotal role in sustaining ethnic identity. By the late 1950s, this one room church was recognized as one of the few places left in the Sourlands to offer a unique physical reflection of the African American experience.

DIRECTIONS

The Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum is located at 189 Hollow Road, in the Skillman section of Montgomery Township, NJ. The museum is located in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Suggested travel directions are from US No 1 South to New Road. Turn right to Rt. 27. Turn left and continue a short distance to Rt. 518 and turn Rt. (Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike). Continue on Rt. 518 through Rocky Hill. Crossover Rt. 206 and continue on Rt. 518 through Blawenber. Go short distance to Hollow Rd and turn Rt.

Continue on Hollow Road; the church will be on your right. Parking to the left of the church.

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Helen G. Brudner

1935-2023

Devoted RMHA Board Member

Professor of History and Political Science

Fairleigh Dickinson University

SAVE THIS DATE

RMHA Board and Program Meeting

November 18, 2023 10 a.m.—Noon

ROCKINGHAM Historic Site

RARITAN-MILLSTONE HERITAGE ALLIANCE

P O Box 5583, Somerset, NJ 08875-5583

www.raritanmillstone.org

An organization of individuals, organizations, and sites working to promote preservation and understanding of the rich, eventful, and cultural sites located in Central New Jersey.

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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 08863

THE DUTCH IN THE MIDLANDS OF NEW JERSEY

Excerpted from a speech prepared for the Princeton Agricultural Society, June 22, 2023, at Suydam Farms

By Donald J. Peck

In his book *This is New Jersey*, the celebrated historian and author John T. Cunningham, in 1953, had this to say about Central New Jersey. “Much of New Jersey’s geographic diversity comes together in Somerset County, where North Jersey’s rolling hills level off into South Jersey’s flatlands, where gently flowing streams swell into the Millstone and Raritan Rivers, and where widely varied soils tempt the farmers.” He quotes Cornelius van Tienhoven, a Hollander, who in 1650 described this region inhabited by the Raritong Indians as “the pleasantest and handsomest country that man can behold... furnishing the Indians with abundance of maize, beans, pumpkins, and all other fruits.”

The Dutch were successful in establishing a trading post at New Amsterdam, on Manhattan Island, and at Albany, New York as early as 1624. The Dutch began settlement in the Achter Kol territory to the west of New Amsterdam in 1641. They had some success in establishing a settlement across the Hudson in 1661 and gave the name of Bergen to their first town and then to one of our Northern New Jersey counties.

Southward the Dutch took over the Swedish Fort Christiana (Wilmington, Delaware) and their trading post along the Delaware River at New Amstel (New Castle, Delaware). To connect their settlements along the Noordt River (the Hudson) with those along the Zuydt River (the Delaware), Dutch Governor Petrus Stuyvesant had New Jersey’s first road renovated in 1655.

Worn over the centuries, an old Indian path crossed the Raritan at the farthest point of sloop navigation. The Dutch renovated a small Native American Path which began at Elizabethtown and continued through country that afterward became Woodbridge, Piscataway until it reached a ford below the Falls of the Raritan at New Brunswick and continued on through present-day Kingston, Princeton to the Falls of the Delaware at Trenton, and then on into Pennsylvania through Bristol to New Castle. In the eighteenth century it was known as “The Road to Philadelphia”. It remained New Jersey’s main road from New York to Philadelphia until 1764.

The vast land to the west of Staten Island, and the point of land at the mouth of the Raritan River were first mentioned in a deed dated December 8, 1651. It was referred to by the Native American name of “Ompoge” which was anglicized to Amboy.

This deed was drawn up by Augustine Herman who had settled with the Dutch in Nieuw Netherland. He had agreed to purchase the Achter Koll Tract for the purpose of planting a colony for Cornelius Van Werckhoven. He was one of the schepens of Utrecht in Holland and Secretary of the Dutch West India Company.

Achter Koll in Dutch means Back Bay and it referred to that stretch of land that extended from the upper reaches of the Hackensack and from the Passaic River to the Raritan River and several miles to the West into the back country almost indefinitely. It survives in the name Arthur Kill (Sound) which separates Staten Island from New Jersey. Speculators, who contended that that was too much territory in the hands of one owner, caused Herman to back off.

Locally, the Native Americans called themselves by a name which sounded like “Rarichons.” It later became anglicized to “Raritan.” The Raritans who occupied the lower Raritan Valley, according to the Dutch, invaded Staten Island, concluding a peace treaty with the Dutch in 1634.

Though there are reports of isolated violence against the Dutch colonists, mostly in response to blatant provocations of the early Dutch settlers, the Raritans did not mount an organized, violent resistance against their invaders. By 1640, the local Raritans were described as a nation of savages who live where a little stream (the Raritan River) runs up about five leagues. At that time, the great Raritan River and its tributaries were still unexplored, although they are the components of the largest river system in New Jersey. Over one thousand square miles of fertile valleys are drained by the Raritan River system.

Down to the year 1664, despite several years of colonizing activity in the valleys of the Hudson and Delaware, the land between these two great rivers had remained all but neglected. The Dutch West India Company simply did not have the capacity or the will to undertake the planting of European civilization throughout the areas to which they had laid claim. While they were faltering, New England and England both laid plans of great effort to take them from the Dutch.

Without firing a shot on September 7, 1664, Petrus Stuyvesant was forced to surrender New Amsterdam to the English and New Amsterdam became New York. Officially ending almost fifty years of Dutch domination in North America, New Jersey's official founding date was recorded when it was invaded, not when it was actually founded by Europeans.

Nevertheless, this capitulation did not mark the end of Dutch cultural influence, for the descendants of the original Dutch settlers lived as much as they had before and, at least among themselves, continued to speak the Dutch language well into the nineteenth century. Though Jersey Dutch children were instructed in both the English and Dutch languages from the earliest days of New Jersey, in their houses and among themselves they always spoke Dutch and rarely was a word of English heard. In New Brunswick, as late as 1793, the sermon was delivered in Dutch. Late afternoon services continued to preach in Dutch well into the 1860s and 1870s.

In 1664 the English settlers negotiated a peace treaty with the Lenni Lenape to acquire the Raritan tribes land. There were a few Dutch families who settled early in East Jersey, notably in the Woodbridge, Perth Amboy, South Amboy and New Brunswick areas. While the East Jersey Proprietors' land sales in 1682 to 1701 marked the beginning of extended settlement in Central New Jersey, the Jersey Midlands didn't open up to Dutch settlement until New Jersey became a Crown Colony under the reign of Queen Ann in 1702.

Somerset land sales were then seriously opened up by the East Jersey Proprietors and included Dutch farmers from Brooklyn and Long Island. The Raritan River led Dutch settlers westward. Among these Dutch settlers was the Suydam Family. Prior to going to New Jersey they had been residents of Brooklyn for their first fifty years. Suydam Farms first began serving central New Jersey in 1713. Early Dutch settlement here then centered near New Brunswick where they named their main street, Albany Street, to honor the New York town from where many of their families had also come. The Suydams were among the many Dutch farmers who moved their products and goods from New Brunswick into New York City via sloop and barge along the Raritan River.

Here, also, many settled down to raise large Dutch families. However, the abundance of Dutch names in Middlesex, Monmouth and Somerset Counties is no proof that these Lowlanders did all of the settling – they merely had the biggest families!

Christian Van Doren and his wife Atlje, who moved to Middlebush in 1723, proceeded to boost Somerset's population by seventeen young Van Dorens – twelve boys and five girls. The young Van Dorens carried on, bearing 129 children among them, and when Mrs. Van Doren died at the age of

ninety-five, she left 352 descendants!

Another remarkable Somerset County family was that of the Reverend Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen came to Three Mile Run near New Brunswick to establish the Dutch Reformed Church in Somerset County in 1719. Theodorus's son, John, became the pastor after the death of his father. Young John married and built the Old Dutch Parsonage in Somerville. There John Frelinghuysen gathered four ministerial students in the first seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in America. It is regarded as the birthplace of Rutgers University (chartered as Queens College) in 1766 to train Dutch Reformed ministers.

The Industrial Revolution brought steamboats to the Raritan River, giving Perth Amboy and New Brunswick a direct link to New York City, but not without the help of the Supreme Court. Fighting to overturn a steamboat monopoly on New York waters, the legendary tycoon of Dutch ancestry, Cornelius Vanderbilt, flew flags from his steamers that read "New Jersey Must Be Free!" until the landmark Supreme Court ruling "Gibbons V. Ogden" opened New York's waters to interstate commerce.

Vanderbilt and his wife had settled in New Brunswick, where she ran the popular Bellona Hotel while he captained steamers up and down the Raritan River. Between 1815 and 1839 Sophia Vanderbilt gave birth to 13 children while she was running the hotel.

The history of the Dutch in New Jersey includes the Dutch and English system of maintaining their plantations. Primarily begun by Queen Ann in 1702, by 1737 New Jersey had one slave for every 12 people. By 1750, the Black population was being brought directly to Middlesex, Monmouth and Somerset County farms by the Royal African Company to the port of Perth Amboy. Between 1776 and 1790 the enslaved population of the United States grew by 40%, as it was protected by the Constitution of the United States.

Many of the descendants of New Netherlanders still reside in New Jersey's Midlands. Here are some present today Dutch family names: Bayard, Bergen, Bloodgood, Bogart, Conover, Cortelyou, Danker, Frelinghuysen, Hardenburgh, Heyden, Hewlett, Hoes, Hulsart, Hulse, Jansen, Konas, Koster, Lott, Low, Mandeville, Polhamus, Potter, Remsen, Roosevelt, Rutgers, Ryder, Schenk, Schuyler, Snedeker, Staats, Stryker, Suydam, Tappen, ten Broeke, Ten Eyck, De Hart, Terhune, Vanderbilt, Vanderburgh, Van Doren, Van Dyke, Van Lieu, Van Syckel, Vanderveer, Van Voorhees, Van Winkle, Vroom and Wyckoff among others.

The influence of the Dutch has been memorialized in several historic sites in the Jersey Midlands. The Jacobus Vanderveer House on River Road in Bedminster was the headquarters for General Henry Knox in 1778-1779. The Van Horne House in Bridgewater was the headquarters in 1777 for Brig. General Benjamin Lincoln.

The Van Veghten House in 1778-1779 served as headquarters for Quartermaster Nathaniel Greene during the Second Middlebrook Encampment. The Abraham Staats House was headquarters in 1779 for General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, the "Drillmaster of the army". The General John Frelinghuysen House in Raritan was built on land purchased by Dutch settlers in 1683 and is now the Raritan Public Library.

Other prominent Dutch family properties and houses still exist including the Updyke Farm and House, Princeton, the Dey Farm and House, Monroe, the Cornelius Low House, Piscataway, the Matthias Hendricke Smock House, Piscataway, the Suydam Farms, Somerset, the Andrew Ten Eyck House, Branchburg, the Lane-Voorhees House, Bridgewater, the Van Wickle House, Somerset and the Hageman Farm Complex and the Van Liew-Suydam Homestead, Somerset, the Vermeule-

Mundy Farmstead, Green Brook, the Van Doren House, Millstone and the Dirck Gulick House, Montgomery .

More than twenty-five prominent Dutch Reformed Churches in Somerset County alone date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They can be found from Blawenburg, Harlington, Rocky Hill, Neshanic, Raritan, Pluckemin, New Brunswick, Millstone, Hillsborough Township, Clover Hill, and Branchville to Pottersville, Peapack-Gladstone Township, Somerville and Bedminster.

Other historic churches connected with the Dutch settlement period include the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, the Church of the Three Mile Run replica at East Jersey Old Town Village, the Griggstown Reformed Church, the Six Mile Run Reformed Church, Franklin Park, and the Reformed Church of Bound Brook in South Bound Brook. All of these sites listed are described in the Fifth edition of the *Guide to Historic Sites in the Raritan & Millstone Valleys* published by the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance.

Let me close with this: While the importance of heritage and local communities is a hallmark of our state, New Jersey is facing a significant increase in development pressure. Thomas Wolfe once wrote “Things which once seemed everlasting – are changing all the time.” Understanding local history and the contribution of cultures and stories of our local places, has the power to inform our lives, contribute to what we know about our past, make sense of the present, and help enlighten us to make appropriate choices in the future.



SUYDAM FARMS, 1803 Rt. 27, Somerset, New Jersey

www.suydamfarms.net. or info@suydamfarms.net

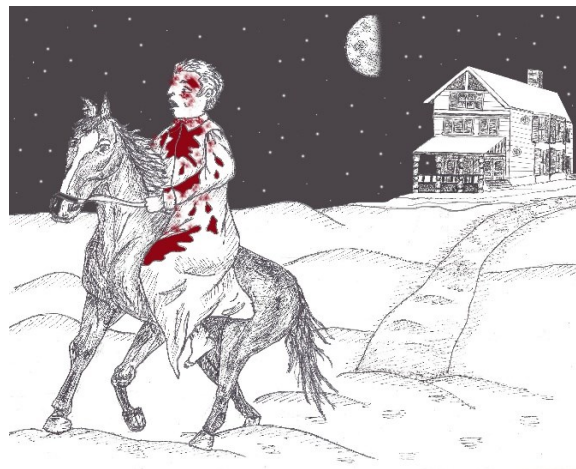
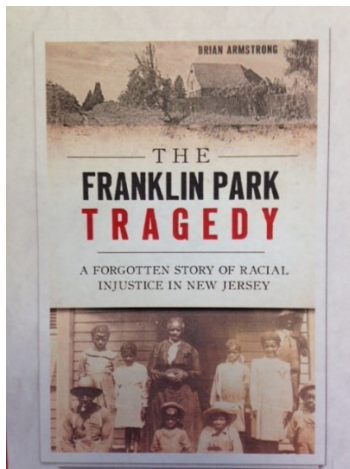
Suydam Farms is the home base of a farming family that settled in Somerset County. It is one of the last operating farms on the Lincoln Highway (Route 27) between New Brunswick and Princeton. The diligent preservation of Suydam Farms and its handsome historic buildings is a tribute to the family’s presence in Central New Jersey since 1713.

In 1996 Ann Suydam, along with three others, convened a group of people interested in the historic sites along the Raritan and Millstone River Valleys and proposed an alliance to promote greater appreciation of its rich heritage and the many historic, educational, environmental and cultural site in this region. To fulfill this mission the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance sponsors programs at various cultural sites, publish a newsletter (The Link), both four times each year and issue and distribute a comprehensive *Guide to Historic Sites* now in its fifth edition. By-laws were formed in 1998. The Suydam Family have been gracious supporters of the Alliance through all these years.

The Franklin Park Tragedy and the Franklin Park Axe Murders by Brian Armstrong

“*The Franklin Park Tragedy, A Forgotten Story of Racial Injustice in New Jersey*” which was published on August 19, 2019, by the History Press. The book provides a detailed account of the Franklin Park Tragedy murders of March 1, 1894, when Lucretia Baker and her daughter, Gertrude, were murdered in their home and her husband, Moore Baker, fought off the two African American attackers and killed them. The second part of the tragedy involves the group blame of the African American residents of the area and the expulsion of some of those residents by the Franklin Park vigilante society called the Mutual Endeavor Society. Lynchings, expulsions, and sundown town designations, which are normally associated with southern states during this era, are shown to have been contemplated by Franklin Park, New Jersey residents.

Surviving historical records, land records, and personal stories are used to demonstrate how the Great Migration of African American families from the South in the twentieth century, with the help of a new group of white farmers, changed the “sundown town” designation for the Franklin Park area. This community change began with the arrival of the Colemans and other families in the 1920s which was the beginning of the transformation of Franklin Park into the diverse place that it is today. The book also includes profiles of prominent African American citizens of the Franklin Park area who worked on the farms and in some cases owned land during the 1800s. The media and their role in the racial issues of this era are discussed since key source material for the book came from various newspapers from every region of the US and in countries such as the UK and New Zealand.



“*The Franklin Park Tragedy Axe Murders*,” self-published through Kindle Direct Publishing (Amazon) in July 2023, provides a dramatization of the Franklin Park murders of March 1, 1894. The book attempts to address the concerns of those skeptical of the conclusions of the Franklin Park inquest which determined that Moore Baker killed the two African American men in self-defense after they killed his wife and child. A screenplay format with dialogue is used to present new disturbing information about the murders acquired since the Franklin Tragedy book was published in 2019.

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.