

Newsletter of the **Bergen County Historical Society** **In Bergen's Attic**

**Early
Winter
2008**

I wonder how many other historical societies in the country have had to

President's Message

complete two major moves of collections within one year? Helped again by our friends at Ethan Allen, we finished the second one by mid-July to accommodate repairs to the Campbell-Christie House by the County of Bergen. The County owns



Déjà vu? Ethan Allen helps move the collections out of the CC House

the house, which sits on BCHS land. We were then surprised to learn that this work has been postponed to next July! BCHS volunteers, taking advantage of the empty house, painted the interior and moved back furnishings and gift

DEP representatives report the Auto Parts yard will be clean by June 2009

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December 2008

shop items. Board members Mike Trepicchio and Ed Schreyer made donations to defray the cost of paint. We're now open again for a full schedule of events, including our 25th anniversary Christmas concerts!



Julia Grolsbeck Ackerman Daguerreotype recently moved. BCHS collections

We kicked off a museum fund raising initiative this fall. Roosevelt School Principal Tony Vouvalides, teachers Mary Miller and Dona Wagner, working with Kevin Wright started a coin drive by school children in New Jersey. Please see the article on page 4 for a more complete picture.

During the second move, we came across BCHS museum plans from past years. Figure #1 is from 1954. By a BCHS donation of right-of-away, we were able to divert the 1956 four-lane bridge, (labeled proposed here) away from along side the Steuben House! BCHS had a grand building with 75 parking spaces planned where the Campbell-Christie House is now located. The Demarest House (moved in 1954-55) is noted on map in its present location.



We honor Alice MacKenzie, of River Edge, former BCHS trustee and volunteer interpreter at HNBL. We recently learned Alice remembered BCHS in her will with a bequest.

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Past President Tim Adriance has been hired by the Blauvelt-Demarest Foundation to restore the Demarest House Museum.. Completion date: June '09.



BCHS Trustee W. John Oddie has repaired several items in the collection including the table pictured, the cage bar in the tavern and sales cabinet in the gift shop.



BCHS Member Manfred Wegner repairs broken window panes in the Out-kitchen and directed painting in the interior of the CC House.

We now face the challenge previous generations have considered but never fulfilled: The construction of a permanent home for our museum collections. While HNBLPC will fund construction of a visitor center on the former Bergenfield Auto Parts yard, we need to build an appropriate facility on our own land to accommodate the wonderful array of objects we already possess. The collections continue to grow: we are constantly in communication with caring donors who wish to entrust important local pieces to our stewardship for posterity.

While we gladly welcome funds raised by the younger generation, who will eventually inherit responsibility for our cherished heritage, we also look towards individual or corporate philanthropy. We offer a donor the unique opportunity to perpetuate their name upon a building and living educational resource that will long endure. **What better way or place to be long remembered?**

Deborah Powell, BCHS President

Cheers to the countless hours and dollars members have contributed and which make all things possible.

We value BCHS membership.



Denise Piccino, Pete Prato, Ed Schreyer, Kevin Wright and Mike Trepicchio -- some of the crew painting the CC House.

Not pictured, John Heffernan who puts in a lot of time in for BCHS. Besides chairing the lecture program, John has begun entering our collections info into a laptop BCHS purchased with PastPerfect software.

Museum proposed for site where the Campbell-Christie House is today!



Artists' concept of initial building of Historical Museum with shaded areas indicating future additions. Architecture and design reflect early colonial and Bergen County culture.

BCHS Plans in the 1950's for a Museum

Note: Proposed Hackensack Avenue Extension

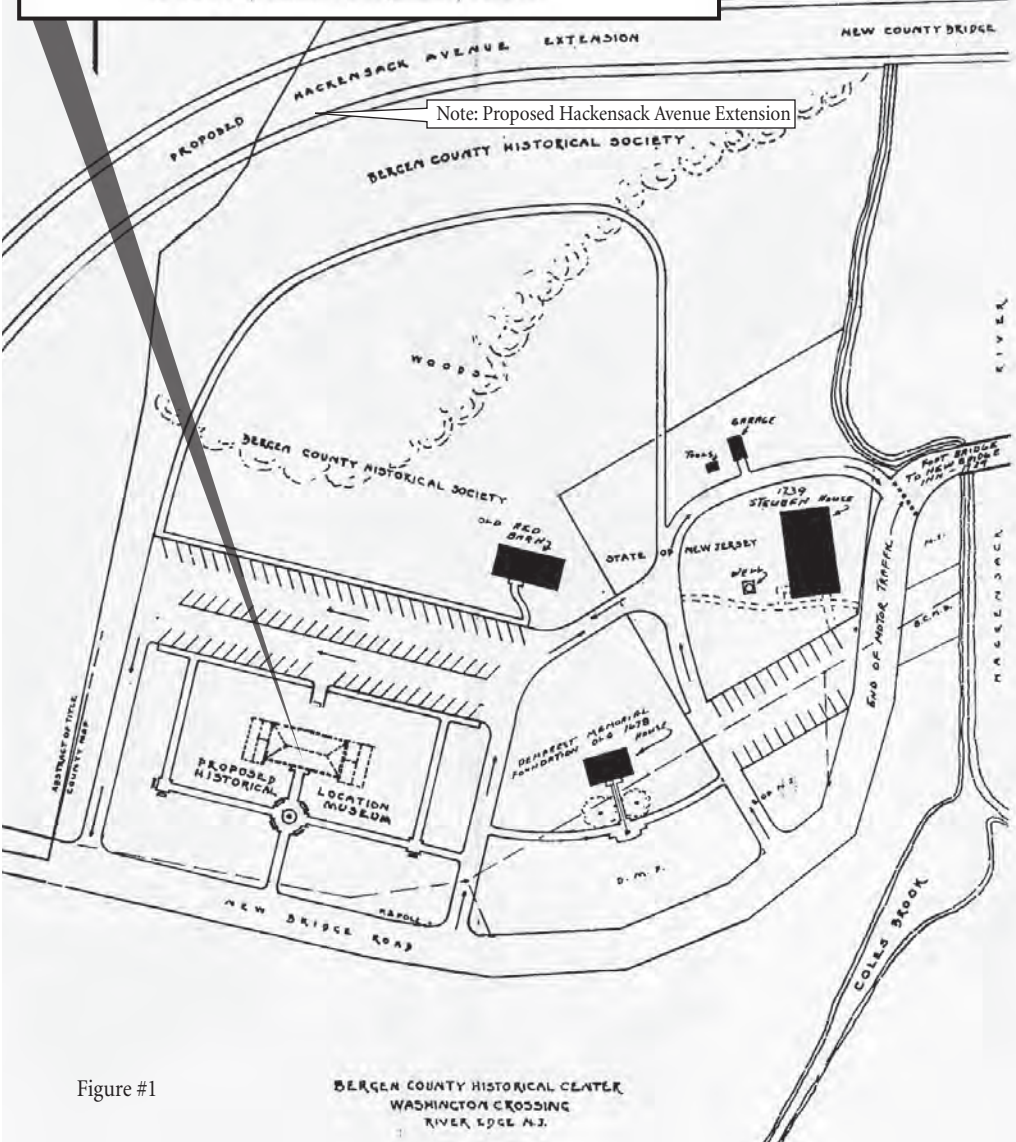


Figure #1

BERGEN COUNTY HISTORICAL CENTER
WASHINGTON CROSSING
RIVER EDGE N.J.

Forward to the Past

by Past President Kevin Wright

History teaches us that every person can make a difference! *Forward to the Past* is a 12-minute movie that follows three students on a learning adventure as they discover history in their own backyard. Along the way, their inquisitive minds experience the value of visiting an authentic historic site holding associations with the American struggle for Independence, where an important chapter in the American story passes from one generation to the next.



Tony Vouvalides, Dona Wagner, Mary Miller and a parent watch the filming

They also learn how artifacts connect us to the past in a unique way, but need special care if they are to continue to inform present and future generations. In the end, our adventurers decide to make a difference, joining with generations of school children who have collected coins for worthy projects that keep safe and honor significant historic places and objects.

Please join us on a journey of understanding and appreciation for the

valuable lessons of history. Support construction of a permanent, safe home for thousands of historic artifacts at Historic New Bridge Landing in Bergen County, New Jersey, site of the Bridge That Saved A Nation. Help us make this special place a heritage destination of international interest, marking a place where our



Film crew and actors in front of the Steuben House

fundamental belief in democracy and human equality first passed the test. Give to the Bergen County Historical Society's New Bridge Conservancy Fund at a Commerce Bank near you. Every penny makes a difference!

Principal Tony Vouvalides and teachers Mary Miller and Dona Wagner deserve the praise and thanks of the BCHS for taking up the cause. Thank you!! ❖

What's in a Name? Historic New Bridge Landing

by Past President Kevin Wright

The southern end of the Borough of River Edge was originally called New Bridge, after a wooden drawbridge built across the narrows of the Hackensack River in 1745. This span earned a place in history as the *Bridge That Saved A Nation*, when General Washington and the American garrison of Fort Lee crossed the Hackensack River in the face of the British invasion of November 20, 1776. Eyewitness Thomas Paine immortalized the darkest hour of the American Revolution in his essay, the *American Crisis*, saying, "Our first object was to secure the bridge over the Hackensack, which laid up the river between the enemy and us, about six miles from us, and three from them. General Washington arrived in about three quarters of an hour, and marched at the head of the troops towards the bridge, which place I expected we should have a brush for; however, they did not choose to dispute it with us, and the greatest part of our troops went over the bridge..."

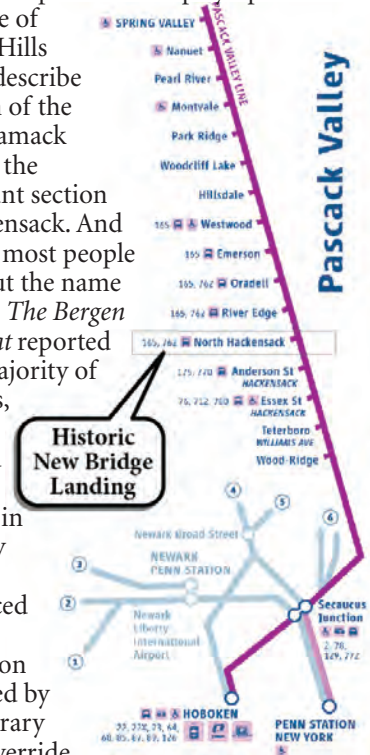
Throughout the long war, the opposing armies repeatedly occupied and contested New Bridge, using the hills and houses in its neighborhood for fortifications, military headquarters, an intelligence-gathering post, an encampment ground and battleground. General Washington identified "New Bridge" as the location of his headquarters while staying at the Zabriskie-Steuben House during the encampment of the Continental Army at Steenrapie (River Edge and Oradell) in September 1780. In a very real sense, New Bridge was the "Crossroads of the American Revolution" and its name is endowed with great historical significance through numerous associations with the struggle for American liberty.

Step forward a century to the arrival of the railroad and we learn that three local property owners, who contributed \$3,200 to build a train station on the

Hackensack & New York Railroad when it opened through River Edge in March 1870, chose the name of "Cherry Hill" for the new depot in their neighborhood. Since there is no evidence discovered of a cherry orchard or any important display of specimen trees in the neighborhood, I conclude that the name was a promotional play upon the old name of the Fairmount section of Hackensack. And how did most people feel about the name change? *The Bergen Democrat* reported that a majority of residents, who attended a public meeting in February 1871, denounced "the imposition attempted by the arbitrary few to override the wishes of the masses, by dubbing the old historical name of New Bridge to the absurd inappropriate name of Cherry Hill."

The name Cherry Hill clung to the area for only thirty-five years. The unanimous sentiment of the citizens of Cherry Hill and New Bridge for yet another name change was expressed at a public meeting on October 5, 1905.

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Alpine Cemetery Joins the “Blue Marker” Program

by Vice President Eric Nelsen and Lindsey Foschini



On August 6, 1861, William and Susan Gecox sold two burial plots on their property “in the Closter Mountain” in Harrington Township atop the Palisades in the northeastern corner of the county. One was a 14-by-11 foot plot they sold to Oliver Cosine for \$12. The other was a 10-by-11 foot plot they sold to Peter Anthony for \$10. Cosine was a relative newcomer to the Closter Mountain, originally from New York City. He was a shoemaker. Anthony, on the other hand, represented the second or third generation of his family in the area (a cluster of houses at the base of the Palisades, along the Hudson, was sometimes referred to in legal documents as “Anthony town”). Like most of his male kin here, Peter Anthony worked as a boatman.

The sale of these two plots marked the beginning of a series of plot sales that would be continued by the Gecoxes (also spelled Geacox, Jaycocks, etc.) and their children into the twentieth century.

Earlier this year, we began the research required to place one of the Society’s “blue markers” at the site, which is on Monument Lane just north of Closter Dock Road in Alpine. We learned that in 1822 William Gecox, a farmer, boatman, and, later, a quarry owner, had purchased 23½ acres near the summit of the Closter Dock Road. There may already have been a small burying ground there when Gecox purchased the land, as the Cosine and Anthony deeds each described the plots sold as lying “south of the old burying ground.” In any case, over the next decades, the Gecoxes and their children would sell the titles to over thirty

plots, with copies of the deeds then recorded at the County Courthouse at Hackensack.

It is always surprising how an investigation into a community’s dead can serve to help bring that community back to life. Combining deed research with a look into census and church records and other genealogical data we had already compiled about the Closter Mountain settlement (an area that approximates today’s Alpine, including the Hudson River shorefront now in the Palisades Interstate Park), we were often able to bring a human element to bear on the story told in plain names and dates on the cemetery’s stones. A heartbreaking example of this is the case of William D. Campbell, who hailed from another long-established Mountain family, and like his brothers, was a boatman and a “dock builder.” The 1860 census showed William Campbell in possession of real and

personal property valued at over \$2,000.

On August 11, 1864, however, he bought from the Gecoxes for \$30 a 20-by-20 foot plot “near a cedar tree.” Two weeks

earlier he had lost treasure beyond all value, as within a day of one another two daughters—Mary Ann, age 10, and Grace, age 9—had perished in an outbreak of scarlet fever.

We have found it a recurring pattern: A plot sale can often be tied

Please see our website page on the BCHS marker program if you are interested in applying to erect a marker for a historic site.

We also seek donations so that BCHS can erect markers at sites we determine to be worthy. For example, it would be great to be able to have a BCHS marker at HNBL.

to a recent sudden death in the family. In these cases, we presume, the plot was bought informally at the time of death, a transaction between neighbors; days or weeks later, the bereaved sat down with the Gecoxes to settle the account with a formal deed. Then as now, it seems, many families did not think of purchasing burial plots until such became a necessity. In many

cases, too, it would be years before the deed would then be recorded at the Courthouse.

Among the more prominent families represented in the cemetery, in addition to the Campbells and the Anthonys, were the

Jordans. This line can be traced back to Joseph Jordan, a French volunteer who had come over with Lafayette to fight for American independence and then settled in Harrington Township, marrying into the local Jersey Dutch. Others were the Dubois family, which began with two brothers who moved here from the Poughkeepsie area at the turn of the nineteenth century, the Parcels family (into which Joseph Jordan married), and of course the Harings, from which the Township to which the Closter Mountain settlement belonged took its name.

The Gecoxes started selling deeds to plots at a dynamic point in the settlement's history, as quarrying the stone beneath the Palisades for building docks at the growing seaport of New York brought about an economic boom. Some of the families who owned land along the riverfront—land that, in terms of agricultural improvement, was often all but worthless—found

themselves growing wealthy in the quarry business. A schoolhouse was built atop the mountain in the late 1840s, and a Methodist meetinghouse was established. Laborers by the score—many of them immigrants, often Irish—arrived to work the quarries. With them also came carpenters to build docks for the quarries and other tradesmen

(including at least one shoemaker, Oliver Cosine). A big gristmill was built on the docks, and at a more remote location, to the north, a “bone factory” for rendering animal carcasses was established. Both of these businesses were



powered by steam, meaning engineers and other tradesmen were needed, in addition to more laborers. Most all of these groups—long standing pillars of the settlement and newcomers from foreign lands alike—find representation in the cemetery, plot sales for which were continued by the Gecox's children after their parents' deaths.

The cemetery continued in use through the twentieth century and, indeed, has seen several burials in the twenty-first as well. The property is maintained by the town of Alpine, near the war memorial.

Like all of the “blue markers”—there are more than one hundred of them that have been erected in the county in almost half a century now—the marker at Alpine Cemetery, which should be in place by early fall, represents a “tip of the iceberg” in terms of historical research. The data we have collected about the

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Franklin Lakes' First Memorial Day Parade

by BCHS Trustee Jack Goudsward

The tradition of the Franklin Lakes Memorial Day Parade started soon after America entered World War II. Prior to that a special ceremony was held at the Masker Memorial then located in Crystal Lake Section of Franklin Lakes. Zachary Masker was the only resident to lose his life in World War I. After the ceremony concluded the participants would leave for the Wyckoff parade.

The First Memorial Day Parade was held May 30, 1942. Its inception was under the auspices of the Borough Officials and honored not only Zachary Masker but all World War I Veterans and those who were now in World War II service with the dedication of the Town's Service Flag.

The parade formed up in front of the then Town Hall, now the Board of Education Building, and was said to have been the largest parade in town to that time. As the march stepped off the order of march was as follows: Police Department Flags, Mayor Bowers and Council Members, Campgaw Music School led by Miss Weissbuch, Franklin Lakes School Board, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Jr. O.V.A.M. P.T.A., Church Organizations, Rain Bow Garden Club, Civilian Defense Council, Hawthorne Band, American Legion, Wyckoff Firemen, Oakland Firemen and the Campgaw Firemen.

The parade started at 9 A.M. and proceeded along Pulis Avenue. Then turning on to Franklin Avenue and then down Colonial Road to High Mountain Road and the Masker Memorial. The parade today still follows part of this original route. At the Masker Memorial the Invocation was given by Rev, Harry Goodrich. He was the Pastor of the

Franklin Lakes Methodist Church. This was followed by the "Massing of the Colors," as the "National Anthem" was played by the Hawthorne Band.

Next the Borough "Service Flag" was brought forward. The town had ordered this flag and at the time of the



Franklin Lake Roll of Honor with the Service flag above it

dedication it contained twenty-two stars. Each star represented a service man from town. This flag would later fly over the town's "Roll Of Honor" located next to the town's old Town Hall.

Mayor Bowers received the flag and said, in part, "This is a Service Flag and a Memorial. Each star represents one of the citizens of the borough who is serving in the armed forces of this country in this war."

"As your Mayor, I have been selected to dedicate it and present it to the citizens of the borough. I dedicate it to service. When we look at it may we always remember that we too must serve".

"Just as we, without our armed forces, would be helpless against our enemies-so our armed forces cannot possibly win this war without the enthusiastic and wholehearted support of the civil population of our country".

"All reports reaching us show that the morale of our armed forces is

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A Century Ago

by Past President Kevin Wright

With the onset of September 1908, cider mills throughout Bergen County commenced grinding out apple juice. Game Warden Herman Meyer arrested James Kitchen, of Hackensack, for shooting a very rare green Heron on Labor Day. The culprit got off relatively lightly as Justice Heath fined him \$20, plus \$2.50 court costs, although the fine could have been \$100. On September 3, 1908, a 53-foot flagpole was raised on the Hackensack Green.

Anglers along the Hackensack River, caught in a storm on September 6th, were seen holding a fishing line in one hand and an umbrella in the other. Schools re-opened September 8th. Autumn tints began appearing on the hillside foliage. While residents of Peetzburgh argued about a proposed name change to East New Milford, workers started laying cement blocks for the first story of the New Milford Fire House on September 14th; the second story was to be frame construction.

As leaves began falling, dahlias, unusually scarce in gardens during the dry summer, became abundant. Orville Wright's aeroplane overturned when 100 feet in the air at Fort Myer,

Virginia, on September 17, 1908, killing passenger Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge and seriously injuring Mr. Wright. Lt. Selfridge thus became the first fatality of a plane crash.

Fort Lee Revolutionary War Monument

After considerable labors following the organization of the Fort Lee Monument Association, the State Legislature appropriated \$6,000 in 1903, allowing sculptor Carl E. Tefft, of New York, to design a suitable memorial. Tefft's design portrayed a Continental soldier, his musket slung over his shoulder, climbing the Palisades, assisted by a drummer boy. The figures were in green bronze, larger than life-size. The base is fashioned from a solid piece of rock hewn from the Palisades.

The monument was set in a park, where the original outworks of the old fort were located. The monument also marked what was said to be the spot that General Lee occupied as his headquarters and where Morgan's Virginia riflemen camped.

The Fort Lee Revolutionary Monument Association unveiled their monument on Saturday, September 26, 1908. At Congressman William Hughes' request, the Secretary of the Navy

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Fort Lee Dedication Booklet, BCHS collections



ordered the Battleship *New Hampshire* to sail from Newport to the Hudson River. It anchored opposite Fort Lee and fired a 21-gun state salute. American soldiers, sailors, and marines joined the Second Battalion of the NJ National Guard Regiment, the Bergen Troop, Grand Army and Spanish-American War veterans and a dozen brass bands, in a parade that attracted 7,000 visitors. Under parade marshal Carl L. Richter, with George F. Burdett and John N. Race as aides, the procession made its way from Leonia Heights to the monument on Palisade Avenue. The line of march also included the Edgewater, Fort Lee and Leonia Fire Departments, Mayor John C. Abbott, of Fort Lee, and Borough officials, numerous civic organizations and a squad of white-clad schoolgirls waving American flags. J. Fletcher Burdett, president of the Revolutionary Monument Association and a lineal descendant of Peter Bourdette, on whose land the fort was built, formally presented the monument to the borough. As school children sang the Star-Spangled Banner, his daughter Grace pulled the ribbon, releasing the flag draped about the monument. Governor John Franklin Fort made the principal address. After several speeches, a band concert and fireworks concluded the celebration.

Pumpkin pie was the fashionable trimming for the midday lunch in autumn. Large quantities of chestnuts were gathered and consumed. Parents blamed foul odors from the river and the sewer at New Milford for an outbreak of diphtheria at the Peetzburgh School. The first frost fell on September 29, 1908. At the beginning of October,

Halloween paraders began preparing their costumes. The old Van Wagener pond at New Milford, west of Linden Avenue, was drained and filled. Under cover of darkness, a motor was spirited away from the Shadyside boathouse.

River Edge School was filled to capacity—there were more students in the three classrooms than there were desks. Although the Bible was still read at the morning session, Arthur Watts' children were again attending school because of State School Superintendent Baxter's ruling, which allowed them to arrive after the scriptural reading without being marked late. Another parent thought her children should also be excused when they were late to school on account of their washing breakfast dishes.

About 20,000 acres of the Hackensack meadows were burned over, sending a shower of ashes upon Hackensack on October 17th. Late roses bloomed and blackbirds took wing. Game Warden Herman Meyers arrested a Little Ferry man for having a screech owl, a bittern and a grebe or "hell-diver" in his possession. Halloween celebrators made a great racket around Hackensack on Saturday night, October 31st, blowing horns, throwing stones against dwellings and removing gates.

Fifteen Democrats and twelve Republicans were elected to the County Board of Chosen Freeholders on Election Day, November 3, 1908. The new Board consisted of 27 members with the additional member coming from Lodi Borough. The Republican national ticket of Taft and Sherman received a majority of 6,323 votes in Bergen County. Both houses of the

New Jersey Legislature went strongly Republican, the Senate being 13 to 8 and the Assembly, 41 to 10. Riverside and Demarest Boroughs were the only two districts in Bergen County where voting machines were still used.

The first snow squall came on November 5th. More than 50 representatives of Bergen County towns and boroughs met at the County Engineer's office in Hackensack that evening to form an organization for the purpose of furthering the project of building a boulevard across the county to connect with the proposed new Hudson River bridge. Apples, potatoes and other vegetables took a big jump in price. With the advent of freezing weather, blacksmiths experienced a rush of sharpening horseshoes. The four vases of flowers around the fountain on the Hackensack Green were taken in out of the cold, leaving the maidens forlorn. In December 1908, the County Building Committee bowed to the public will and decided to erect a new courthouse on the old site, instead of several other more central locations in Hackensack. The holiday rush was on at the Hackensack post office and delivery wagons worked overtime with heavy loads of holiday packages. Santa Claus visited the Christmas festival at the North Hackensack Sunday School with a team of Rocky Mountain goats pulling his wagon loaded with oranges and other good things up the main aisle to the pulpit. He presented Pastor Duryea with an envelope containing a sum of money and handed Miss Abby Wills, the church organist, a mouse trap with a \$29 gold piece for bait, together with a poem referring to the young lady as being frightened by a mouse in the organ. A new fire alarm, made from a section of trolley rail, was placed in the triangle on Main Street, Hackensack, but residents complained that it looked too much like a gallows. ❖

Franklin Lakes Memorial Day, cont. from page 8 extremely high. Let us as private citizens, keep our morale equally high. Let us have no doubts, no complaining and no fears. Let us give all if necessary to bring victory to our beloved land."

"I present this flag to all the citizens of the borough. May it be their symbol of their dedication to the service of the United States of America and may God add his blessing to their service".

After the dedication, floral tributes were placed at the base of the Masker Memorial. This was led by Mrs. Israel, sister of Zachary Masker. Other tributes were placed by Mrs. Harry Snyder representing the Wyckoff American Legion Auxiliary and Mrs. H.J. Payne, representing the Rain Bow Garden Club.

Band music preceded the Rifle Squad Salute and the sounding of "Taps". The ceremony concluded with a Benediction by Rev. Goodrich.

NAMES OF SERVICE PERSONAL ON SERVICE FLAG

Terrance Melville
 Albert Ernest Melville
 John O'Donnell
 James O'Donnell
 Edward Gorman
 William E. Blauvelt
 Theodore Van Itallie
 Kurt Roehrs Jr.
 Joseph Rego
 Robert Knight
 Robert W. Brousseau

Melvin Hopper
 Theodore Weidanz
 David J. Vervaet
 Robert Tilton
 Curtis Thompson
 Charles Winters
 John Deurloo
 Joseph Van Dyke
 Albert Cosgrove
 William Cosgrove
 Curt Lechler

Memorial Day Program	
BOROUGH OF FRANKLIN LAKES	
At Zachary Masker Memorial	
Invocation	Rev. Harry Goodrich <small>Pastor Franklin Lakes Methodist Church</small>
Massing of Colors	
"National Anthem"	Hawthorne Band
Dedication of Service Flag	Mayor S. Bowers
"God Bless America"	Hawthorne Band
Address—Ralph Hendrickson, Borough Attorney	
Placing of Floral Tributes on Zachary Masker Memorial—Mrs. Catherine Israel, Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. Harry Snyder, Garden Club, Mrs. H. Payne	
Music	Hawthorne Band
Firing Squad	Taps
Benediction	Rev. Harry Goodrich

Indiana Job and the Lost Nitroglycerine Factory

by Douglas F. Job

A thunderous explosion shook Little Ferry and the neighboring towns to their foundations with a force never experienced before. A dense cloud of smoke, mud, flesh and other debris rose and then rained its' gruesome contents down to earth hundreds of feet from the site. The shock wave tore the main mast from a sloop docked nearby, rocking the vessel like a child's toy in a tub. Its' hull and upper works pitted by shards of brick and timber.

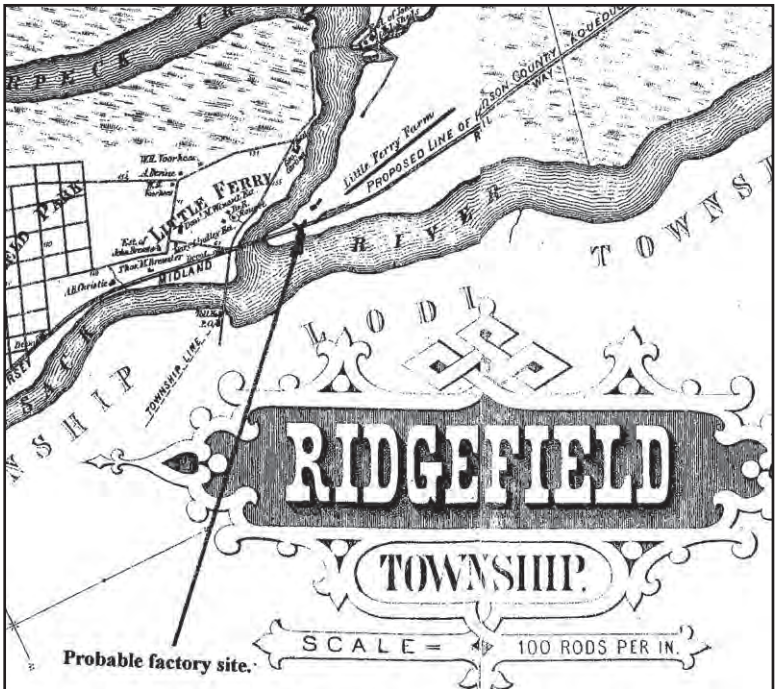
When the dust cleared the extent of the destruction became evident. Fully one half of the 140 long factory was gone, a forty foot crater where it had stood, the rest of the building a smoldering ruin, wrecked beyond repair. Three men and a boy lay dead, their shattered remains scattered. It would take several days before the authorities and the curiosity seekers would discover or stumble over the remains which were strewn over the debris field.

The latest terrorist act? The opening paragraphs of a Clive Cussler novel, or this Summer's movie tease? No, none of the above. This really did happen, right in Bergen County, New Jersey and marked the end of one of Alfred

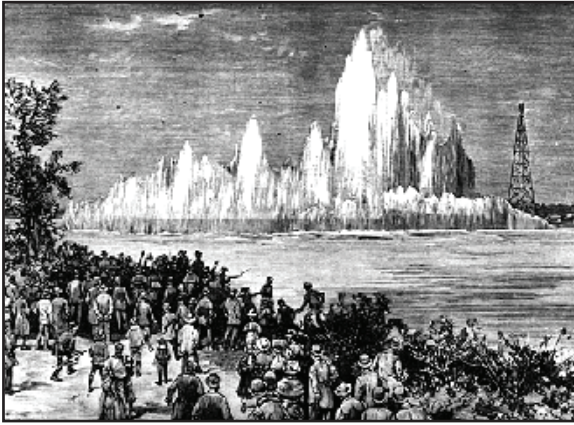
Nobel's (of Nobel Prize fame) first business ventures - the United States Blasting Oil Company which in that Spring of 1870 manufactured nitroglycerin.

Over the years I had heard the oft repeated rumors and stories about the factory explosion in Little Ferry, but though the legend is frequently repeated, there are few solid details. My grandmother, who moved to the Borough in 1907 told of an explosion of a fire works factory that killed a boy years before she was born. My parents-born in the 1920's- have heard of the factory explosion, but like everyone else they knew something had exploded but the when's, where's and how's were open questions. To me, the stuff of legend, until recently.

I became interested in the nitroglycerin factory after seeing a collage' in the Little Ferry mayor's office



which has an engraving of the explosion, and what appeared to be a facsimile of the initial 3,600,000 frank notice for Alfred Nobel's French Dynamite (DYNAMITE NOBEL)



http://nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/industrial/articles/lundstrom/index.html

factory. This, I was told, was the depiction of the famous explosion and the Borough's website had the details. There are some details on the website which claim that the factory was established in 1866 by Nobel and that it was the Borough's first industrial site. It states that the factory exploded in 1870 but no one knows where it was located.

Members of my family have been the Borough Engineers for the Borough of Little Ferry since 1933. Many members of both sides of the family were born and raised there, including two sets of great grandparent's, both sets of grand parents, and too many aunts, cousins, whatever-in-laws to count. The family have also been surveyors longer than have been Borough Engineers. We have surveying records which predate the Borough's incorporation, some predate the Lincoln Administration. Surveying requires extensive research into old deeds, maps and obscure references in order to establish property lines, easements, Rights-of-Ways, etc. Familiarity with outdated measuring systems such as "Rods, furlongs, links and chains" are part and parcel of that with which a surveyor must be familiar. So, due to long ties with the Borough, some of the requisite skills and materials as well as a now peeked curiosity, I decided to find the lost

nitroglycerin factory.

Nobelprize.org has brief historic synopsis of The Nobel Dynamite Companies written by Ragnhild Lundström, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Economic

History at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, which documents Nobel's founding of the "United States Blasting Oil Company", its' nitroglycerin factory on the east side of the Hackensack River in Little Ferry, New Jersey in 1866. The article also mentions its' destruction three years later. There are also an engraving and a "DYNAMITE NOBLE" stock subscription notice matching those in the Little Ferry mayor's office. Case closed, except - since its' 1894 incorporation Little Ferry has been on the west side of the Hackensack River, not the east.

Newspaper articles of the period between 1866 and 1871 do not indicate that Mr. Nobel ever ventured into New Jersey, though there are reports of a "Professor Noebel" demonstrating nitroglycerine in Manhattan. He may at that time have also been soliciting investors, partners, etc., for his company or performing some other, related function, or it may not have been Alfred Nobel at all. There were no reports found regarding the founding of the United States Blasting Oil Company whatever.

There are, however, 1870 newspaper reports of the destruction of a nitroglycerine factory by explosions at the "hamlet" of "Little Ferry Farm" on March 17. It was reported that a Colonel

Tallferro (a.k.a Tal, Tall or T.) Schaffner was the “proprietor” of the factory and over several days accounts from the coroner’s inquest, it seems that there were two explosions. The first caused by a workman’s fall from a collapsing platform which triggered the second sympathetic explosion killing four (three workmen and one workman’s son), destroying half of the factory, and most of the stockpiled explosives and ingredients. The remaining half of the factory was heavily damaged and a sloop (fore & aft rigged sail boat), which was to transport the explosives to New York harbor for trans-shipment to the West Coast, de-masted. Damages estimated at the time were \$ 43,000.00. This was the second time Colonel T.P. Schaffner - who may have been either Colonel “T.P.” Schaffner listed on the rolls of the Union Army of the Potomac’s “Iron Brigade” or Lt. Colonel T. P. Schaffner recorded to have been in the Stonewall Brigade of the Rebel Army of Northern Virginia, was involved in a nitroglycerine explosion in New Jersey. He was held liable for \$3,000.00 for an 1867 accident in Paterson. No links between Alfred Nobel and Colonel Schaffner have yet been found, nor have further details of his identity been established at this time.

The reportage of the era does not locate the “Little Ferry Farm” other than it being on the Hackensack River “near” or “about a mile from Ridgefield”.

Further research into the location of the “Little Ferry Farm” found an area marked as such on the “Ridgefield” sheets of A.H. Walker’s 1876 “Atlas of Bergen County” archived at the Bergen County Historical Society’s Library. This map shows “Little Ferry Farm” located on the east side of the Hackensack River bounded to the north by the Overpeck Creek. It also shows a “Little Ferry” developed area north of Overpeck Creek bounded by the Hackensack River. That area is now part of the Village of Ridgefield Park and the “Little Ferry

Farm” occupies the area currently owned by Public Services Electric and Gas as well as other Governmental, Transportation, Industrial and Commercial entities in the present day Borough of Ridgefield. Based on historic maps - assessment maps, surveys, etc. in comparison with the 1867 deed description of the premises from the New York Sugar Beet Company to Walter E. Lawton, there is no doubt, whatever, that these unincorporated areas are those noted in the newspaper reports.

There are again no identified links between Alfred Nobel and the New York Sugar Beet Company or Walter E. Lawton, nor they to Colonel Schaffner. During the Coroner’s inquest, the Colonel was established to be the site’s “proprietor”, and other news reports indicate that he leased a factory building from Mr. Walter E. Lawton which was the site of the explosion, which was by the description in Lawton’s deed, A.H. Walker’s “Little Ferry Farm”. Lawton’s deed is very specific as to the transfer of not only land but site furnishings & works, livestock, wagons, harnesses, tack, etc. No lease or rental information was included.

My conclusion is that there was a nitroglycerine factory, likely affiliated with the United States Blasting Company, and therefore Alfred Nobel, sometime after June 19, 1867 and was destroyed by multiple explosions on March 17, 1870. The factory was located in the present day Borough of Ridgefield, probably in the area south of the junction of the Overpeck Creek and the Hackensack River approximately 150-170 feet east of the river bank, but it was assumed to have been in the present day Borough of Little Ferry simply based on the name. Since, however, Little Ferry was known at the time as a part of New Barbadoes and appears in the 1876 Atlas as also being part of Lodi Township it physically cannot have had this factory within its’ borders.

Unfortunately, the site has been redeveloped several time in the last 138 years, once having been the Pfister Chemical Works, now PSE&G's Bergen Generating Plant, with both Conrail an the Susquehanna Rail Road Rights-Of-Way running through it. It's doubtful there are any remnants remaining, however, based on our findings if you intend to look, watch out for the chocho's.

References: A.H. Walker 1876 "Atlas of Bergen County - Bergen County Historic Society Library @ Felecion College, Lodi, N.J.

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Schirra, Sr., P.E., L.S. - Job and Job Consulting Engineers archive.

Reminiscences of Madeline Bordigon Job 1900-1994 - Author

Time Life Books

Selected works by Shelby Foote

Selected works by Bruce Catton

"Realty Atlas Bergen County, New Jersey" - several editions

- First American Real Estate Solutions ❖

Alpine Marker continued from page 7

various deeds and other information in preparing the marker will be filed in the Society's library, to be available to scholars and history enthusiasts for generations to come.

From a personal standpoint, it will be satisfying to see the cemetery among the company of the other Bergen County markers. In the many hours we have spent in the deed room in Hackensack, the State Archives in Trenton, and in the cemetery itself, it has been hard not to feel as though we have gotten to know the people of this community in some sense. Long hours poring over stones that have weathered to almost illegibility—returning at different times of day to try different conditions of daylight and shadow on them—has brought its own curious satisfactions as well. In the area designated by that first pair of deeds as "the old burying ground" are two such stones. The smaller shows a flower with the names "Joseph Ogden" and "David William"—in all likelihood, we feel, a pair of brothers taken young. The other, for which it took us many tries to get even an incomplete transcription, reads at top,

ERECTED BY OSIAS L.

ANTHONEY

IN MEMORY OF HIS WIFE
MARGARET ANTHONY

The dates cannot be clearly discerned. Beneath this, is "Alonzo Antony." A search through the death records at Trenton showed that Margaret Anthony, wife of Osias, died on May 23, 1852, of "consumption" (tuberculosis). Their son, Alonzo, died in September of the same year, no cause given, at the age of ten months. The reward of being able to place a human story—even such a sad one—upon what had seemed but a blank stone strikes us as an apt metaphor for the purpose of a historic marker program. ❖

Christmas

New York, Jan. 11, ‘/64.

Dear Cousin Annie,

In your last you asked me to write you something about our amusements here during the holidays, which I promised to do, and will try my best to interest you. The first and chief – is skating; we have had fine cold weather, consequently the ice has been in good order and I think it would amuse you to see the crowds enjoying themselves in this healthy sport, old and young, rich and poor gliding over the ice so easy and graceful – except a “particular few” the new beginners and I assure you they are anything but graceful. It is comical to see their efforts to “strike out.” I think a person must be very patient to teach any one how to skate and I feel as if I owe a debt of gratitude to my kind instructor.



Winter photo taken in Dumont. BCHS collections

Then after skating we have had good sleighing. You should have seen Fifth Avenue the first day of sleighing, it seemed as if every one who could get a sleigh of any description was out. From morning until night the air was filled with the ring of the bells, and a very pleasant “jingle” it was. New Years day was as still as cold be, and the less I say about it the better. I could not help comparing our amusements with those of old times and wished I could see a genuine yule-log, mistletoe-bough, a large ball trimmed with evergreens and filled with “merrie ladyes” and gallant men dancing gaily to the music of a violin. But the pleasantest thing about Christmas is our family reunions. How cheerful our homes seem with all our relatives and friends together, striving to make each other happy. Is it no sorrowful to think of the mourning homes made by this war? Last year this time, a mother was proud of her noble son, so manly in his uniform. Now, perhaps, she mourns her great loss. I want to tell you about a grave in Greenwood [i.e., Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn – ed.] which interested me very much. Near the new entrance stands a small lot holding but one grave, at the head of which is a white marble slab bearing this inscription:

“Henry Jacobus.

Aged 16.

Killed at the first battle of Bull Run.

A widow’s offering to her country- ‘She hath done what she could.’”

What could be more touchingly simple and beautiful!

But I must stop. Remembering your promise to write to your

Cousin Emma

Miss Annie Barstow

Monticello

Recently, I was lucky enough to acquire through the online auction site eBay a remarkable item that appears to be a “copy book” dating from Jan. 11, 1864 to at least June 2, 1864. For the benefit of our younger readers, in the days before photocopy machines, if someone wanted to make a copy of a written document, they had to use what was called carbon paper. It was pressure sensitive and was placed on top of a blank piece of paper with a blank piece of paper or other blank original document on top. The author then wrote out what ever was wanted and a copy was “automatically” made to the bottom sheet. Sometimes, especially when dealing with legal matters, the bottom or copy sheet was a blank page in a book. A whole book of such copies would then be called a “copy book.”

Thus, the copy book that I acquired contains copies of letters and other items the author felt were important to save...and important they were, as they include letters, poems, and other items written to and from old friends from Hackensack. Robert D. Griffin ❖

What's in a name, continued from page 3

A petition signed by two hundred patrons of the Cherry Hill post office requested the Post Office Department to replace the name with that of North Hackensack, according to the wishes of the local Improvement Association. Although a reporter for *The Bergen County Democrat* claimed, "that a majority of the citizens opposed such a change," a Postal Inspector conducted a public meeting on Saturday, October 6, 1906, and heard but one dissenting vote. Indeed, local residents believed the so-called Cherry Hill Tornado that had struck ten years earlier, destroying considerable property and several lives, had materially retarded the area's growth. Odium also attached to the name of Cherry Hill because of associations in the public mind with two well-known state prisons of that name, one in Philadelphia and the other in Charlestown section of Boston. Of greater concern, Cherry Hill was widely publicized in the 1890s as one of the most notorious sections of New York, where the "dandies" of New York's underworld were styled the "Cherry Hill Gang." Of immediate concern, Jimmy Brennan, head of the Cherry Hill Gang, was gunned down at the corner of Catherine and Madison Streets just after midnight on January 10, 1905. Despite a number of bystanders, police found the dying man alone and unable to identify his assailants, who shot him twice in the back.

On a whole other level of inconvenience, mail destined for Cherry Hill was frequently misdirected to Cherryville in Hunterdon County. It was hoped that the change of name would augment the efforts of the Cherry Hill & New Bridge Public Improvement

Association, which had succeeded in lighting the station and streets in the past year and in beautifying the grounds. According to report in *The Evening Record* on November 14, 1906, the Post Office Department in Washington, D. C. notified the Cherry Hill postmaster that the name of the station would be changed in the near future. The North Hackensack Improvement Association immediately sent correspondence to the Erie Railroad, asking the name to be changed on station signs.

We stand at another crossroads today, where an enlightened interest and pride in the citizens not only of the Borough of River Edge but also of the County of Bergen and even the nation call out for recognition and honor for this significant place in American history.

On March 11, 2003, the Historic New Bridge Landing Park Commission officially endorsed changing the name of the "North Hackensack" postal substation in the Borough of River Edge to the historic name of "New Bridge." That was accomplished several years ago by an act of Congress. Soon we hope that NJ Transit will agree to return the historic name of New Bridge to its proper place in the public eye and in our esteem by renaming the North Hackensack station. ❖



Painting by Emil Stange resurfaced during move. Very large – 5 ft by 4 ft approx.

Please consider the Bergen County Historical Society if you would like to make a tax deductible gift to a 501 (c)(3) non-profit before the end of year. If you give a BCHS Holiday Contributing Membership (\$40) to someone special, we'll send a card out in your name. For a \$200 donation we'll send you a mug with your choice of images: the Arnot Hackensack River Painting or the Portrait of Garret Demarest, both from the BCHS collections.

Please specify which item and where it should be delivered.
Thank you! Email me ASAP: contactBCHS@bergencountyhistory.org

Hackensack River

Demarest Portrait



Holiday Card



Visit our website for events, articles and messageboard.
www.bergencountyhistory.org

And consider the gift of music at HNBL

Open House

**Sunday, Dec 14, 2008,
2:00 - 4:00 PM**

Join us for holiday treats and entertainment at the Campbell-Christie House in honor of Sinter Klaas. Seating limited to 30 people. \$7.00 Adults, \$5.00.

Winter Tavern Nights

**Thursday & Friday, Dec
18 & 19, 5:00 to 7:30 PM**

Join us at the Black Horse Tavern in the Campbell-Christie House for holiday tavern fare and a visit from St. Nick. Linda Russell & Companie will provide musical entertainment. Seating limited to 30 people. Donation: \$30 per person. (\$27 BCHS members).

25th Annual Colonial Christmas Concerts

**Saturday, Dec 20 - 7 & 8:30 PM
Sunday, Dec 21 - 6 & 7:30 PM**

Our magical holiday concerts, featuring Linda Russell, & Companie, will be held in the Campbell-Christie House with seating limited to only 20 guests per show. Enjoy the open-hearth cooking demonstrations in the Outkitchen. Not suitable for small children. Suggested Donation: \$25 (\$23 for BCHS members). Tickets available in advance. Send your check with 1st & 2nd choice of time & date & a SASE to BCHS Colonial Christmas, PO Box 55, River Edge, NJ 07661. Ticket sales available on internet on our website/ Paypal. Suggest wearing walking shoes.

The Society's Twelfth Night Party

January 4, 2009 - 2:00-5:00 PM

Close out the winter holiday season with us! We invite members and guests to bring a favorite food or drink, to share in an afternoon of celebration and New Year cheer at Campbell-Christie Tavern, HNBL.





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Deborah Powell & Kevin Wright,
editors & layout

Items for the newsletter may be submitted
to D. Powell, Attn: Newsletter
or emailed to
contactBCHS@bergencountyhistory.org

Note: If a ** appears after your name—it is time to renew your membership. Thank you!