



CROSSROADS

Newsletter – Summer 2024

ASSOCIATION NEWS

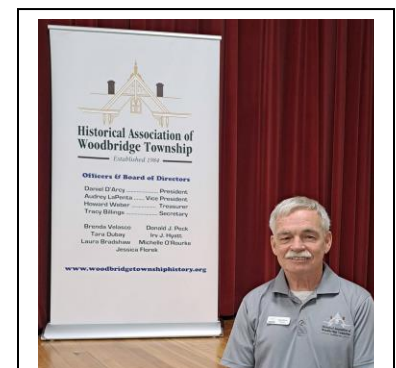
Happy summer! We are now on program break after completing a successful 2023-2024 season focusing on the Victorian era. Here are some highlights of our spring activities.

Our guest speaker in May was Ulysses Grant Dietz, great-great-grandson of President Ulysses S. Grant, whose topic was “Ulysses and Julia Grant: Dancing on the Edge of the Gilded Age.” Mr. Dietz gave a most interesting talk on his ancestors – from the time Ulysses and Julia met, through their years in the White House, and then retired life together after Grant’s presidency. A large crowd assembled at Trinity Episcopal Church of Woodbridge for the presentation and we appreciate the historic church allowing us to meet in their parish hall for this special program. *(Photo right: Ulysses G. Dietz with HAWT program director Donald J. Peck)*



The presentation in June by Woodbridge Township Historic Preservation Commission (WTHPC) was titled “Leisure Activities in Woodbridge: 1850 – 1950.” It highlighted a variety of recreational activities that enriched the life of township residents for over 100 years. Also on display were artifacts from the personal collection of Tara Dubay which included a pedal car made by her husband Todd, modeled after those used at the Woodbridge Speedway. *(Photo left: WTHPC commissioners John Lande, Miguel Martin, Daniel Diaz, Frank Pelzman Jr., and Martin Genser behind WTHPC chair Dr. Dolores Capraro Gioffre.)*

Historical Association of Woodbridge Township hosted a special event in June: The spring meeting of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (LHSNJ), of which HAWT is a member organization. Held at Acacia Youth Center in Woodbridge, the meeting featured guest speakers including HAWT President Daniel D’Arcy and a showing of the documentary “Wreck of the Broker – the Woodbridge Train Disaster of 1951.” Enthusiastic positive feedback was received from those in attendance and we appreciate the efforts of all the volunteers who helped organize the event. *(Photo right: HAWT President Daniel D’Arcy welcoming guests to the LHSNJ meeting at Acacia Youth Center.)*



Artifact Spotlight



Amanda (Amy) Breckenridge (1875-1945) was a lifelong resident of Woodbridge and member of the Janet Gage Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) serving as Chapter Regent and Chapter Chairman of Historical Research. HAWT was excited to receive the donation of her Ex-Regent DAR pin and insignia for display in the museum. An attractive framing in Amy's honor has been sponsored by HAWT members John and Karen Keithler. Be sure to view the Breckenridge wall display and read more about Amy's life of service in Woodbridge Township when you visit the museum.

(Photo: HAWT member Karen Keithler at the Breckenridge framing. Karen is a member of the Matochshoning-Rebecca Cornell Chapter NSDAR in Metuchen where she also serves as Chaplain.)

The Marquis de Lafayette at Woodbridge, New Jersey

200 years ago, in 1824, the United States was politically polarized and facing a momentous presidential election. President Monroe decided to invite the aging Marquis de Lafayette, our Founding French Father, for a "Farewell Tour" of America to remind us of the values of the nation's founding. Importantly, Lafayette was an ardent abolitionist and feminist.

This bicentennial is being organized by the *American Friends of Lafayette* (AFL), and the Princeton and Trenton events include: A lecture by Historian Dr. Sean Wilentz of Princeton University and a reenactment at 10am on September 25 at Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton followed by a gala dinner that evening at the Masonic Temple in Trenton, featuring 19th Century music and reenactors and remarks by local leaders.

During his whirlwind tour of the United States, the Marquis de Lafayette addressed crowds in Woodbridge on September 24, 1824. He was given elaborate ceremonies on the Woodbridge Town Green (corner of present-day Rahway Avenue and Freeman Street) and stayed at the Cross Keys Tavern. He could have stayed at Moore's Tavern, circa 1683, (foot of Green Street), the Pike House on the opposite corner of Green Street (where John Adams had stayed in 1774) but chose the Cross Keys Tavern where George Washington had stayed on April 22, 1789, enroute to New York City to be inaugurated the first president of the United States. Today the only one still existing is the Cross Keys Tavern, now converted into an apartment house.

After involvement in the American and French Revolutions, political upheavals in his native France, imprisonments and exiles, war and peace, he returned to America after an absence of 40 years for a grand tour of the nation he had helped to birth. When he arrived at New York on August 15, 1824, he was met by American Revolution veterans who had fought alongside him those many years ago.

While addressing crowds in Woodbridge, one of the distinctive features of his reception was the presence of 16 little girls dressed in white, each bearing on her dress a letter made of marigolds, which together formed the words "Welcome Lafayette."

Commenting on his experience at American taverns, Lafayette wrote: "Simplicity of manners, the desire to oblige, and a mild and quiet equality are the rule (everywhere). The inns are very different from those in Europe. The master and mistress sit down with you and do the honors of an excellent dinner; and when you depart, there is no bargaining over the bill."

Lafayette could recall when he first arrived in America in 1777, how he had quivered with excitement while dining at Philadelphia's City Tavern among so many American patriots he admired. Lafayette adored America and because Washington represented America, he had to meet him. This would be the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Lafayette named his son George Washington. Left childless by nature, Washington was paternal by instinct. The general treated Lafayette as a son, while the young man, in ardent yet fractured English, regarded Washington as "the salvation of his country and the admiration of the universe."

The American Friends of Lafayette is working with communities in New Jersey on commemorations for the bicentennial of his Farewell Tour. See the website at <https://lafayette200.org>. ~ Contributed by Donald J. Peck

Museum Update

*It's been over five years in the making ... but the **Woodbridge History Museum** is almost ready to open!*



Our volunteers have been working tirelessly to prepare for the grand opening...

Photo right: Mitzi, Mary, and Rose serve on the hospitality committee and joyfully share their expertise. The kitchen is stocked with supplies so we are ready to host any event.

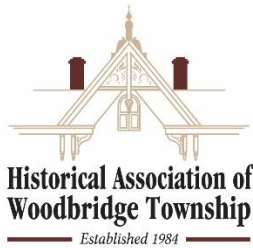


Photo left: Susan, Frank, and Maureen have done an excellent job setting up the gift shop! Be sure to bring along extra cash when you visit – books, postcards, and gift items are for sale and your purchases will help support the museum.

Photo right: A team of workers at the museum. We could never have accomplished this monumental task without the support of our dedicated HAWT member volunteers.

*As we prepare for the Grand Opening in September, you are cordially invited to a "Members Only" preview opening on **Saturday, August 17, 2024**. Stop in between 12noon-4pm to enjoy this special 'first viewing' of the museum!*





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Woodbridge NJ 07095

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Website:

www.woodbridgetownshiphistory.org



Woodbridge History Museum
86 Green Street, Woodbridge

MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Join us at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall at
First Presbyterian Church, 600 Rahway Avenue, Woodbridge

September 23, 2024 – Monthly Program

"Frightful Conditions: An Italian Immigrant Shanty Town and the Fight for Fair Living and Working Conditions" presented by Mark Nonestied, Division Head of Middlesex County Division of History and Historic Preservation. In 1913, the Rev. Colombino Galassi, an Italian priest at St. Anthony's Church in Port Reading, waged a battle for better living and working conditions of Italian immigrants at the Port Reading Coal Docks. This presentation will examine Father Galassi's fight for fair treatment of Italian immigrant workers and conclude with a reflection on Italian immigrants in New Jersey today.

October 28, 2024 – Monthly Program

"Hall-Mills Murder Case!" presented author Joe Pompeo. On September 16, 1922 the bodies of Edward Hall, an Episcopal minister, and Eleanor Mills, a soprano in the choir at his church and wife of the parish sexton, were discovered on an abandoned farm near New Brunswick. Although prosecutors failed to persuade a grand jury to return any indictments, the double murder in New Jersey became a media obsession. Based on Pompeo's book *"Blood & Ink: The Scandalous Jazz Age Double Murder That Hooked America on True Crime,"* which will be available for purchase at the program.

Historical Association of Woodbridge Township is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax-exempt charitable organization.