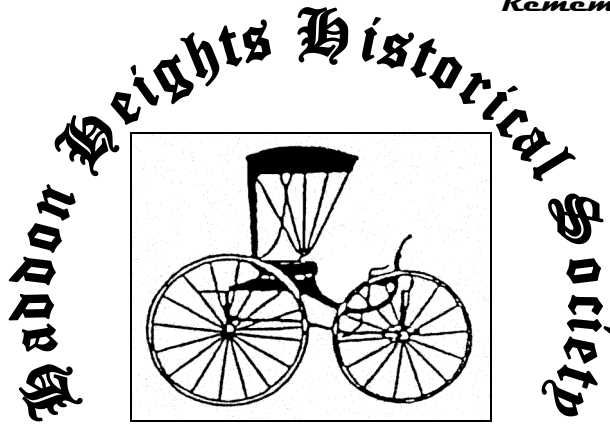


" Remembering Yesterday For The People Of Tomorrow "



Bulletin

P.O. Box 118 • Haddon Heights, NJ 08035

WWW.HHHISTORICAL.ORG

Volume 43 Number 1

January 2018

We meet on the third Monday of January, April, July, and October - at 7:00pm in the Library

HEAR YE, HEAR YE: THE MEETING FOR JANUARY 2018 WILL NOT BE HELD- Because of

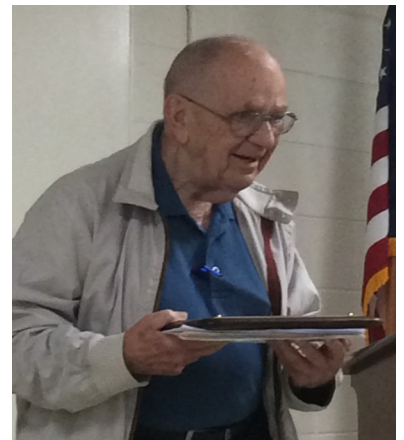


the ever present threat of inclement weather in January, the Historical Society Board of Trustees decided to skip our January meeting for 2018. Another factor is that the Martin Luther King holiday generally conflicts with our meeting date. The Library is closed, necessitating a change of dates. This change is being made on a trial basis and is anticipated to be a one year only schedule change. We will review member input about this schedule change. We apologize for any inconvenience this decision may cause our members.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE- I would like to wish everyone a HAPPY and HEALTHY NEW YEAR !!!! It was a difficult decision when the Haddon Heights Historical Society Board of Trustees considered all factors and ultimately voted to cancel the January meeting. The safety of each of our members was our primary concern. We decided to cancel early (providing notice in the October newsletter), in case of extreme cold, snow, or ice, and the weather has been kind enough over the last few weeks, to provide us with all three!!! I look forward to seeing everyone at our April meeting. Now..... I have a challenge for every member who is reading this message: Please talk to your friends, neighbors, family and acquaintances, and invite them to our upcoming April meeting. If we can all bring out just one guest, we can share the wonderful programs we enjoy, and hopefully increase our membership!!!!!! We are a vibrant and active core group, but we need to increase our numbers. I am pleased to announce that David Somerville is our new Treasurer. David comes to us with a wealth of financial knowledge and background. Stay warm everyone! I will see you all in April. *Elena*

TREASURER'S REPORT- With the announcement of David Somerville as our new Treasurer, we want to acknowledge the many years of untiring service given to the society by our outgoing Treasurer Art Ritter. At the October 2017 membership meeting, Art was presented with a plaque expressing our appreciation and thanks!

JOIN THE REVOLUTION- PART II- This is the second in a series of articles telling the story of how George Washington's military command tent was saved from the ravages of the Civil War, after residing in the Custis-Lee Mansion in Arlington, Va., overlooking Washington, DC. It is now housed in the new Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, where it is the focal point of the museum experience. I encourage everyone to travel back in time as we follow the story...



(Art Ritter)

“A short time ago an old negro woman belonging to the estate came to tell me that she had been intrusted by her mistress with the key to one of the cellar rooms...”

General Irvin McDowell recorded these words in his report to the Adjutant General’s Office for the Union Army to explain how he came into possession of George Washington’s marquee. McDowell wrote from his headquarters at Arlington House, the now abandoned home of Confederate General Robert E. Lee and his wife Mary Custis Lee. Arlington stood on high ground overlooking Washington, D.C.; ground from which an attacking Confederate force might place cannons and bombard the vulnerable city below.

The woman McDowell discussed in his report was Selina Gray. Before leaving Arlington on May 15, 1861, Lee, the granddaughter of Martha Washington, ordered the marquee and other Washington family artifacts locked in the cellar for safekeeping. She gave the key to Gray, a second-generation slave whom she entrusted with the care of the Lee family’s home and contents. Federal troops occupied Arlington on May 24, 1861 and within days the 1,100-acre plantation was transformed into a camp for 14,000 soldiers. They erected tents, dug latrines, and felled massive oak trees to build fortifications.



Though the Union Army ravaged the land surrounding Arlington House, it left the mansion itself relatively untouched. A telegraph office was installed in the house and occupied some of the rooms, but that was the only modification to the building. At this point the Civil War was still in its infancy. Many people—including McDowell—expected the conflict to be over in a few short months and thus saw no need for unnecessary damage. On May 30, 1861, in response to a letter from Lee regarding the safety of her home, McDowell wrote:

Mrs. R.E. Lee:

Madam: I am here temporarily in camp on the grounds, preferring this to sleeping in the house. I assure you it has been and will be my earnest endeavor to have all things so ordered that on your return you will find things as little disturbed as possible. Everything has been done as you desired with respect to your servants, and your wishes, as far as possible have been complied with. I trust, Madam, you will not consider it an intrusion if I say I have the most sincere sympathy for your distress, and I shall be always ready to do whatever may alleviate it. -Irvin McDowell

While Union Army policy may have been to respect private property, that wasn’t always upheld by individual Union soldiers. As the war dragged on into 1861, many began pilfering objects from the house, and broke into the cellar where the Washington family artifacts were stored. Some men may not even have known the importance of the objects they discovered, but Selina Gray did. Gray would remain at Arlington House throughout the war. Born and raised in slavery at Arlington House, is it possible that she shared some of the reverence that visitors and family members felt toward the Washington family relics. In late 1861, when it was clear that the war would not be a short one and that her mistress would not be returning home anytime soon, she approached General McDowell.

Appalled at the soldiers’ increasing vandalism, she explained to him the importance of the items stored in the cellar. She not only gave him the key to the cellar but also a list of missing items. In his report to Washington a few weeks later, McDowell wrote “...that some time back this room had been broken into and was now open” and that Gray “wished to be relieved of the responsibility of having the key.” Frustrated, McDowell added, “...this place is not a safe one for the preservation of anything that is known to have an historical interest small or great.” One Arlington researcher would later remark: “The man to whom the soldiers owed their complete obedience, believed that he could not protect the Washington relics. Had Selina Gray, felt

the same way, their fate would have been very different.”

In January 1862, the marquee and the other Washington family artifacts were transferred to the Patent Office in Washington for safekeeping. Gray was given her freedom in 1863 when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, but remained at Arlington House through the end of the war. After, she and her family moved to a 15-acre farm nearby and started a new life. There was no longer a place for her at Arlington House—or any living soul for that matter. The Federal government had confiscated the property from the Lee family and established a national cemetery there for Union war dead.

The war years had been hard ones for Mrs. Lee. Forced to abandon her home in May 1861, and with it the Washington relics inherited from her father, she spent months living with different family members at their homes in Virginia. After being caught behind enemy lines during one Union Army offensive, and then crossing back into the Confederacy under a flag of truce, she settled in Richmond. There, she seldom saw her husband, who was away commanding the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. In 1862, her daughter Annie died of typhoid fever. The following year her son Rooney, a Confederate cavalry officer, was captured and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp. Compounding her troubles, Mrs. Lee’s health steadily declined because of rheumatoid arthritis. She was eventually confined to a wheelchair, where she knitted socks for the soldiers in her husband’s army.

By 1869, four years after the end of the war, she had made little progress in her fight with the federal government. Except for the return of a few personal possessions, her repeated letters and petitions had either been turned down or ignored. In February 1869, she made another attempt using Captain James May, a Lee family acquaintance. May personally delivered a letter addressed to President Andrew Johnson to the Secretary of the Interior, Orville H. Browning. Browning’s department supervised the Patent Office where the relics, including Washington’s marquee, were on public display. Browning took Mrs. Lee’s letter to President Johnson who approved the return of her property. The next day Browning wrote Mrs. Lee:

Department of the Interior, Washington DC, February 24, 1869

Dear Madam:

I am directed by the President to inform you that in accordance with the request contained in your note to him of the 10th inst: all the relics from Mount Vernon bequeathed to you by your father, George Washington Parke Custis, which were taken from Arlington and which are now deposited in the Patent Office, will, upon properly being identified, be delivered to such agent as you may designate, and authorize to receive and receipt for them in your name.

With sentiments of high regard

O.H. Browning, Secretary

But it was not to be.....

Stay tuned in upcoming issues of the newsletter for the rest of the story!

(Text and photos courtesy of the Museum of the American Revolution– Author: Paul Davis reprinted with permission)

2018 Membership Application / Renewal– Haddon Heights Historical Society

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____ E-Mail _____

Type of Membership: _____ Single- \$10.00 _____ Household- \$15.00

I would like to make a tax deductible donation to Haddon Heights Historical Society, in the amount of \$ _____

Coming Events

Winter 2018- League of Hist. Societies of NJ mtg-
Ocean County Hist. Society hosts- Ocean County
April 15, 2018- HHHS General Membership Mtg.
7:00pm in the Haddon Heights Library- Panel Dis-
cussion: Growing up in H.H. in the 1930's / 1940's

June 2018- League of Hist. Societies of NJ mtg-
Somerset County Hist. Society hosts- Somerset

*Contact Peter Hill for more information about LHSNJ Meetings

MEMBERSHIP DUES- Your "Paid Through
YEAR" is printed on your Newsletter label. Your
dues help us keep history alive. Only paid-up mem-
bers will continue to receive the HHHS Newsletter!

Provide us your e-mail address, and we will also
send you an electronic full color copy of each edi-
tion of the newsletter in advance of the mailing.

HEIGHTS NOTE CARDS- The Society has
reprinted our popular note cards featuring the four
pre-Revolutionary War homes in town. They are
available at the Library. Only \$4.00 for a pack of 8.

2017 Historical Society Board

<u>President-(2016-2018)</u>	Elena Hill
<u>Vice-President-(2016-2018)</u>	Bob Hunter
<u>Past President-</u>	Margaret Westfield
<u>Treasurer-(2018- 2020)</u>	David Somerville
<u>Secretary- (Ends 2020)</u>	Carolyn Finegar
<u>Trustees-(2016-2019)</u>	Ken Funkhouser
	Anne McAdams
	Peter Hill

COMMITTEES / CHAIRS

<u>Newsletter Ed.-</u>	Ken Funkhouser
<u>Membership Chair-</u>	Joan Rossler
<u>Web Master-</u>	Dan Alexander
<u>Nominating Comm.-</u>	Bob Hunter/ Peter Hill

<u>Borough Council Liaison</u>	Vacant
<u>Affairs-</u>	Vacant
<u>Merch/Fund Raising-</u>	Joan Rossler
<u>Programs/Publicity-</u>	Doug Michell/ Dan Alexander

Programs/Publicity- Asst.	Vacant
<u>Digital Photographer</u>	Vacant

Contact the Board : WWW.HHHISTORICAL.ORG
Mail correspondence- P.O. Box 118 Haddon Heights, NJ 08035

The Haddon Heights Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization. Please keep us in mind as you plan your charitable donations. Make us part of Your Legacy...

2018 is now here. 100 years ago, our country was in the throws of a Flu Epidemic where thousands died. I saw on the news a few days ago, that 46 states are reporting major flu outbreaks right now. If you are a student of history, you know that history often repeats itself and those who ignore the past are doomed to repeat it. Please share your life stories while you can! If you want to tell our members about your adventures, please set them to writing and send them to me..... Thanks for listening! Ken Funkhouser, Editor (23 yrs)

Haddon Heights Historical Society
P.O. Box 118
Haddon Heights, NJ 08035

