A FIRST! Governor Reading House Open for Society’s Gala Tours on June 5, 2011

A rare opportunity exists to tour the 251-year-old, privately-owned Georgian style mansion Gov. John Reading, Jr. built along the South Branch of the Raritan River in 1760 when it is opened for the Hunterdon County Historical Society’s annual gala, the “River Road Ramble”, Sunday, June 5 from 3 to 6pm.

Raritan Township Police are closing River Road from Junction to Pennsylvania Avenue between 2:30 and 6:15pm to assure the safety of guests. Parking and registration will be at 67 River Road. Flat heel shoes are suggested to protect the antique flooring and for one’s own comfort.

The Ramble also includes six other properties in the South Branch Historic District. Three houses on the tour are short strolls from the Reading mansion and include that property’s c.1775 Reading English-style barn with a two-story 1995 apartment, the c.1750s Barber Farmstead, and the Society’s 2009 state-of-the-art Archive Building. Although the c.1770-1810 Shippen House will afford only exterior views, guests can walk a path from the Gov. Reading house to see the surprising 40-foot drop to the Raritan River there. An eight-passenger van will shuttle guests to the other two houses at the intersection of Junction and River Roads where the c.1760 Daniel Reading House and c.1840 Cherryville Store, relocated from Franklin Township, are under restoration for commercial use. Parking is available there, so guests have the option of stopping to see these two houses before or after seeing the other five.

Attendance at Society galas, usually limited by invitation, is open to the public this year because of the unique opportunity to tour the Reading Mansion and other historic buildings. A donation of $75 includes the tours, hors d’oeuvres from Max’s Trattoria in Flemington, wine, and music by harpist Mary Elizabeth Young. Guests also may have a 5 by 7-inch profile cut by silhouette artist Ruth Grabner of Washington, NJ for $25.

Reservations may be secured online at www.hunterdonhistory.org or by mail to HCHS, 114 Main Street, Flemington, NJ 08822. Make checks payable to the Hunterdon County Historical Society. Attendance by pre-orders only by May 30.

Tours will be ongoing during the gala so guests can see the houses in their order of choice and still have time to visit and enjoy the food. Vignettes of historical artifacts and documents, two of the Society’s many Hunterdon quilts, and a room-size hooked rug of Sergeantsville will be displayed on the first floor of the Society’s “smart,” state-of-the-art archival storage building.

Brief descriptions of the historical tour houses follow on page 1109.
HUNTERDON HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

The library has received a significant gift of books about historic preservation and related subjects from Ilona English of Ringoes, NJ: Alderson, William T., and Shirley Payne Low, Interpretation of Historic Sites. 2d ed. (1985)
Bowman, John S., American Furniture (1982)
Bowsher, Alice Meriwether, Design Review in Historic Districts (1978)
MacLeish, A. Bruce, The Care of Antiques & Historical Collections. 2d ed. (1985)
New Jersey Quilts, 1777 to 1950: Contributions to an American Tradition (1992)
Schwartz, Marvin D., American Furniture of the Colonial Period (1976)
Seale, William, Recreation of the Historic House Interior (1979)
The following books were donated by the Hunterdon County Cultural and Heritage Commission, occasioned by the Commission’s move to new quarters:
Kington Mill ... Photographs, Written Historical and Descriptive Data (Historic American Engineering Record, 1997)
Living With Old Houses (Greater Portland Landmarks, 1975)
New Jersey Women’s Heritage Trail (2000)
New Jersey’s National Historic Landmarks (n.d.)
In addition, the Commission donated a number of books and pamphlets which can be sold for the benefit of the Society.
The following items were donated by recently retired trustee Clifford L. Hoffman:
Two photographs of the Flemington Cornet Band Rittenhouse, Edna, diploma from Flemington High School, 1913, and county school certificate, 1909.

PHILHOWER: Descendants of Philip and Mary Mueller Phihower are planning their 95th Annual Family Reunion to be held Saturday, September 18, 2011, at the Cokesbury United Methodist Church, Cokesbury, NJ. If you are a Phihower descendant, or enjoy studying the Palatine Immigration into Hunterdon County, contact Jane Eick at 908 766-0807 or visit our website at www.pasgafamily.org.

HISTORICAL HOUSES ON JUNE 5 TOUR:
The 1760 Governor John Reading House stands today as a testament to the great wealth, social, and political importance of his day and is protected as a national historic landmark. As a stone foundation, the house is a prime example of perfectly symmetrical Georgian architecture. Its construction year is verified by the large numeral inlay of specially darkened bricks across a side wall. The interior matches the exterior beauty.

The c.1775 Reading Barn of English design with large double doors on each side to allow wagons to drive through and also provide a threshing area will be party central for refreshments and entertainment. A charming 1895 apartment with a loft bedroom in the barn is on the tour.

The c.1770-1810 Shippen House also had a 1754 mile, now apparent only by its stone foundation. After the Readings said the property, which stands on a bluff about the river, it changed hands frequently. One owner was Edward Shippen, a prominent lawyer and lobbyist from Philadelphia, who purchased it in 1776 as a retreat during the Revolution. He sold it two years later at a $5,800 profit, and it is said, used the money to finance the marriage of his daughter, Peggi, to General Benedict Arnold. The house was enlarged over time and now shows Georgian influences with colonial revival embellishments.

The c.1750s Barber Farmstead is a charming, fully restored, wood-framed, one-and-a-half story cottage known to cultural geographers as an Upper Delaware Valley Type. A 1747 coin was unearthed by the house.

The c.1760 Daniel Reading Homestead, a frame structure has had many additions and enlargements, but some original features remain such as windows, some siding, eaves, paneled doors, and a huge walk-in kitchen fireplace. Restoration of this large dwelling is nearing completion.

The c.1840 Cherryville General Store was established by John Hoffman at the Cherryville crossroads in Franklin Township. It also served as the Cherryville Post Office from 1850 to 1919, but was last used in the 1920s. It was purchased and renovated in 2007 by David Hauck; its restoration is nearing completion.

Membership Report
A warm welcome is extended to those members who have recently joined the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

 Reported by Harold O. Van Fleet, Membership Chair

Patricia Baccigalupo, Flemington, NJ
John Baka, Clinton, NJ
Kimberly Costa, Lebanon, NJ
Mary Lou Crabtree, Flemington, NJ
William A. Decker, Califon, NJ
Ms. Nancy L. Heath, Thorofare, NJ
Lora W. Jones (2012)
Edna Pedrick (2012)
Bert Rice (2012)
Donald F. Scholl (2012)
Jay Langley (2013)
Mary Ellen Sodalinn (2013)
Mary Elizabeth Sheppard (2014)
Stephanie Stevens (2014)
Harold O. Van Fleet (2014)
William Young (2014)

In Memoriam: Edwin K. Large
by John W. Kuhl

I was with much regret that we read in the April 14, 2011, Hunterdon County Democrat of the death in Evans Georgia on April 3, 2011 of one of our long-time former trustees, Edwin K. Large at age 98. The Large family had long been prominent in the legal circles of this county and Ed was, no exception, having been the registered agent in the 1960s for such companies as Eastman Kodak, Standard Oil, and American Tobacco in the days when those and many other national firms were registered and held their annual meetings here in Flemington. In addition, he served for 30 years as the Hunterdon County Counsel. He had a wide variety of lifelong interests but it was his support of our Society that we particularly appreciated over the years. More than just a trustee, he was our legal adviser, delivering calm, sound opinion on the many such problems that confront a society such as ours. From its founding in 1950 until 2001 he was the president of the Large Foundation, one of the area’s key philanthropies, which continues to annually grant many much needed financial support to our Society. Upon retirement he moved to Georgia and most of us had not seen much of him lately. But we remember him well as a nice man of unquestioned integrity who was always ready to assist where he could. His wife, Mary Mitchell Westall Large, died at age 93 on February 4, 2010. Our sympathy goes out to his family.

Spring 2011

Hunterdon Historical Newsletter

Vol. 47, No. 2

HOW TO JOIN

Hunterdon County Historical Society
114 Main Street
Flemington, NJ 08822

Please enroll me as a member of your Society.

Annual $20 per year
Family $25 per year
Contributing $50 per year
Sustaining $100 per year
Institutional $100 and up per year
Life $400
Patron $1000 or more
Student $5 per year (up to 18 yrs old)

Amount enclosed $_____

Name __________________________
Address ________________________
Phone __________________________
Email __________________________

I want to volunteer! ____ Yes

Please enroll me as a member of your Society.

Annual $20 per year
Family $25 per year
Contributing $50 per year
Sustaining $100 per year
Institutional $100 and up per year
Life $400
Patron $1000 or more
Student $5 per year (up to 18 yrs old)

Amount enclosed $_____

Name __________________________
Address ________________________
Phone __________________________
Email __________________________

I want to volunteer! ____ Yes

Please enroll me as a member of your Society.
WILLIAMS TALL-CASE CLOCK INHERITED BY THE SOCIETY

Grandfather’s clock, made by Thomas Williams, Hunterdon County’s first clockmaker, now among the Historical Society’s collections

by Fred Sisser III

What is undoubtedly among the first clocks ever made in Hunterdon County has been inherited by the Hunterdon County Historical Society, who accessioned the timepiece on 14 March 2011. Coming from the estate of Society member, Lester V. Rockafellar—who died on 16 February 2010 at the age of 71—the tall-case clock was made by Thomas Williams of Flemington circa 1803. Generally known at that time as an eight-day clock, but also called a tall-case clock, or simply tall clock, it is now usually referred to as a grandfather’s clock.

Made of fruitwood, probably cherry, the clock’s overall height measures ninety-six inches. On the dial is painted “Thomas Williams” underneath of which is an “eight day clock,” made by Thomas Williams, now in the home of her brother who resides in Idaho, as a “Householder” and assessed on 40 acres of land. As “Thomas Williams of Flemingtown in the Township of Amwell” in 1808, the Sheriff of Hunterdon County sold “one clock case,” appraised at $80.00, which was most likely made by Thomas.

By 1795 Thomas was described as being in possession of 37 acres, one horse and two cows. As “Thomas Williams of the County of Hunterdon” was among those who witnessed a Hunterdon County will made in August 1802.

In 1803 Thomas Williams of Flemington in the township of Amwell” borrowed $50.00 from John Capner in the Hunterdon County Court of Common Pleas. As “Thomas Williams of Flemington in the Township of Amwell” he bought several more acres in that Township in 1802 on the public highway leading to Trenton.

In January 1798 Jonathan Williams deceased & at the time of his death in Elizabeth Township, Joakim Hill (1783-1869), proved to be his executor.
Charles Bartels was undoubtedly one of the most influential citizens of Hunterdon County in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He not only had the ability to conduct his personal affairs, but also to arrange and make available to the public a second collection of his personal and business papers. Charles Bartels was born in New Germantown (now Oldwick), NJ on March 18, 1801. After graduating from Union College in Schenectady, NY, he began his prosperous career as a lawyer at the office of Nathaniel Saxton in 1822. Bartles married Eliza Hart of Flemington in 1823, and had four children: Joseph, William H., Charles Jr., and George. From his second marriage to Eliza E. Randall in 1846, following his first wife’s death the previous year, he had two more children: Percival E. and Evelyn B. (Bush) Johnson. Mr. Bush married Sarah Eleanor Willson in 1871. They were married and raised a family during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The collection is comprised of personal papers of Mr. Bartels and related family papers, including Croton, Klinesville, and Flemington materials spanning nearly two centuries, consisting largely of court dockets, deeds, articles of agreement, account information, and correspondence related to the family, business, and personal records of Charles Bartles and his descendants. Charles Bartles was a prominent Flemingboarded attorney and active during the nineteenth century, and the principal attraction of this collection is the group of court dockets from his practice. There are four dockets that cover the work of Bartles and affiliated attorneys in the Court of Common Pleas of Hunterdon County from 1807 to 1845; a period that is not well represented by official dockets books within the records of the county court records. Other items of note include documents discussing the treatment and sale of slaves in the area, the construction of the Flemington Railroad, and the Civil War as it relates to Hunterdon County. There is no doubt that this rich collection of local historical materials will be heavily referenced by local historians and genealogists alike.

**Survey of Hunterdon County Historic Sites**

arranged by Linda Hahola

This survey of historic sites in Hunterdon County was carried out primarily by Dr. Edward Johnson. Edward Johnson, Ph.D. (English) was a member of the Hunterdon County Historical Society. From 1960 to 1961 he was the Chairman of the Hunterdon County Committee on Historic Sites and Structures, and conducted this survey as a private endeavor paid for by D. Howard Moreau, solely for the good of the county. Dr. Johnson established his own criteria for site selection, which may help to explain the absence of several prominent historic structures. Johnson’s survey was used in the 1970s as a source for the more formally funded historical survey conducted by the State and County. The collection contains NJ State Historical Site Evaluation Worksheets and their supporting material. Forty-one sites have been evaluated, and each includes the worksheet, a map, and commentary. Photographs are included for many of the sites, as well as attendant negatives. All of the sites are in Hunterdon County. Dr. Johnson provided an index that divides the sites by category. There are twenty-seven possible categories; in addition, he has three notes that they will be sent at a later date, but are not present in the collection.

**The Records of the Kingwood Grange, No. 106**

arranged by John Matsen

This collection contains the records and papers of the Kingwood Grange (No. 106) of Hunterdon County, NJ from its formation in 1882 to 1987. The Grange played an important role in the life of rural communities; it was a fraternal, social, professional and lobbying organization in grand combination. These materials as preserved are important for a variety of reasons: resources for general historical research in Kingwood and Hunterdon County; they provide a record of individuals in the Kingwood area for genealogical purposes; and they are a window into the sociology of rural America during the turn of the century.

Probably the most useful aspect of this collection from an organizational standpoint is the minute books of the Kingwood Grange. They are fairly complete from its founding in 1882 until the last entry in 1987 that noted the grange building was to be sold. The organization continued for perhaps a dozen more years, but with no home, records were not kept in a central location and were apparently scattered. Also of interest to local genealogists is the wealth of information regarding the civil war vets of that post in this collection. Look for both of the above by summer!

In addition to these, many folks may know how a day like Memorial Day is observed; the film “Money at Work” has returned from the preservation house. If you recall, last year the Society obtained a grant to restore this interesting and unique film that was partially shot in Flemington in the 1930s. Now that the film is back, I was able to get a typewriter view of the film notes, and it contains a few surprises. Although I won’t spoil anything, I will say that there is a segment of the film that is particularly interesting, and after a public viewing to be determined by the Trustees, I hope to post at least a portion of the film as a clip to our website.

Dealing with multimedia archival items like the film is something that your curator is finding more on my plate these days. For what it’s worth, the experience of handling the preservation of this film, but I have also run across some multimedia in the collection I am currently arranging (the records of the Flemington Children’s Choir). Nested in the middle of this collection of photographs (lots and lots), scrapbooks, typed reports, etc., there are two photogra phed CDs of Choir School performances. One is clearly labeled the Graduation Performance of 1934. The other has no label, but in a different performance, but I am left guessing as to where or when. When this collection is finished and released I will be pullding the selection of the choir up on the web for all to hear. As time goes by, I am sure that there will be more and more of this material to find and post to the Society in the donations we receive.

S peaking of our website, if you have not had a chance to view it yet, by all means, please do so! I will, of course, continue to write a column for our Newsletter, but in the future there will be updates with posts concerning new releases, archival happenings, and other news posted to our website and its attendant Facebook page. I am not entirely sure that our Facebook page is “working,” but my daughter says it is the “bean.” I hope that this is a good thing… Happy Spring!
The Flemington Cornet Band, photographed in 1888 by Sunderlin. Standing, left to right, [unidentified], Al Fisher, [unidentified], Will Fisher, [three unidentified], John Kunsman. Seated, left to right, ---- Smith, [unidentified], Howard Barass, [two unidentified], Chas. Rittenhouse, Harry Green.