



THE HISTORIC COUNTY

Volume 15 • Issue 1
Winter 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE
PASSAIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bloomington • Clifton • Haledon • Hawthorne • Little Falls • North Haledon
Passaic • Paterson • Pompton Lakes • Prospect Park • Ringwood • Totowa
Wanaque • Wayne • West Milford • Woodland Park

MEMORIES OF THE CHARLES MORTIMER HOWE SILVER TEA AND COFFEE SERVICE

By Catherine Howe Grosfils

I first saw the silver tea and coffee service at my grandparents' home on the dining room sideboard. I was too little to understand the significance of this treasured thank you gift to my great-grandfather from the city of Passaic for his many years of service as Mayor. I only knew it was beautiful, an untouchable object made of gleaming, polished, shiny silver. As a young child, I was tall enough to stand with my nose against the top edge of the sideboard and see my reflection in the beautiful coffee pot, well, not perfectly like in a mirror, but in pieces along the vertical ridges. It was fascinating! And now and then it was actually used, by my grandmother, and when it came to live at our house, by my mother. I remember watching as my mother carefully poured tea for a lucky houseguest! The silver got very hot when filled with boiling water for tea or coffee; I had to be careful not to burn my fingers!

Years later (circa 1975), the silver service came to live with me, and, although I used it occasionally, I am forced to admit that it spent most of the following thirty-five years packed away in a box on a closet shelf. Our life was much more casual than those of previous generations, and sterling silver was seldom required.

During those years of ownership, however, I did some research to find out more about my great-grandfather and the tea service. The Howe family moved out of New York City to the New Jersey countryside in 1853, and became very active in building the new community, serving on church, bank and hospital boards and donating land for civic buildings. Three generations of Howes lived in Passaic, including (1) my great-great-grandfather John Moffatt Howe, (2) his son, the recipient of the tea service, Charles Mortimer Howe, and (3) his grandson, my grandfather, John Canfield Howe, who was actually born at home on a street named for the family - Howe Avenue. The silver service was presented to my great-grandfather Charles Mortimer Howe in 1903, at the end of his second term as Mayor of Passaic. The inscription reads: "Presented to Hon. C. M. Howe by the citizens of Passaic in recognition of his services as MAYOR. 1887-1891 and 1899-1903."

Further research revealed an article in the New York Times on December 4th, 1903, about a dinner party held the previous evening in the town of Passaic. It began, "the citizens of Passaic,

Continued on page 2



**PASSAIC COUNTY
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

LAMBERT CASTLE

3 Valley Road
Paterson, NJ 07503-2932

Museum: (973) 247-0085

Fax: (973) 881-9434

E-mail: info@lambertcastle.org

Website: lambertcastle.org

OFFICERS

Glenn Corbett
President

Linda Kaplanovich
First Vice President

Edwina Hibel
Second Vice President

Robert Vermeulen
Treasurer

Vacant
Secretary

TRUSTEES

Catherine Cavallo

Andrea DeLuca

William Liess

Helen Mault

Phillip Mezzina

Dolores D. Most

Walter Nacnodovitz

Maryjane Proctor

John Pullara

Edward A. Smyk

Cathy Tonnon

**HONORARY LIFE
TRUSTEES**

Norman Robertson

Edward A. Smyk

HONORARY TRUSTEE

Hazel Spiegelberger

STAFF

Heather Garside,
*Acting Historic Site Manager
and Curator*

Dorothy Decker,
Administrative Assistant

Henrietta Weiss, *Head Docent*
William Collins, *Docent*

Patrick Byrnes,
Library Research Specialist

Lambert Castle, a picturesque 1892 Victorian mansion located on the Garret Mountain Reserve, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Castle is operated and managed by the Passaic County Historical Society, a not-for-profit 501(c) educational institution.

HOWE TEA SERVICE *cont. from page 1*

to revivify civic spirit and to develop a new civic enthusiasm, last night gave a big dinner to themselves, at which President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton University was the principal guest and chief speaker," and, "Head of Princeton delivers a speech on Civic Patriotism." Another headline read, "Mr. Roosevelt [U.S. President] also sends a letter referring to the purpose of the festivity." According to the article, "two hundred and fifty citizens of Passaic sat down to dinner... at which Mayor Howe presided." The Mayor read aloud the very gracious note in which U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt had sent his regrets, and this reading was "received with many cheers and a tiger" (for those of you as ignorant as I, a 'tiger' is an enthusiastic roar, often heard in the vicinity of Princeton, and there were many people from that city present at the dinner that evening). After Mayor Howe's reading of Roosevelt's letter, NJ State Senator John Kean introduced the already famous speaker from Princeton, Woodrow Wilson, who was also greeted with cheers, and major parts of Wilson's speech are included in the article. It sounds like quite a night!

Nothing, however, was said in the Times article about the presentation of the silver service to Mayor Howe during that illustrious evening, so I must assume it was not done at that time. I was sorry not to find the evidence I was looking for, because this dinner occurred right at the end of Howe's second term in office and would have been the perfect time to honor him, in this great-granddaughter's opinion! Perhaps further research will reveal the date and occasion on which it was presented.

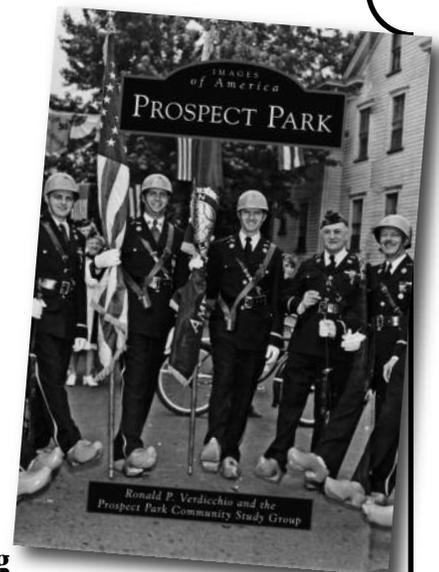
Last year I contacted Heather Garside, the curator at PCHS, and was thrilled to learn that they would be pleased to have the tea set in their museum. I delivered it in June, 2014. The set will make a lovely addition to the large portrait of the Mayor's father, John Moffatt Howe, which was donated by my first cousin Jane Howe several years ago. We are delighted to have these family treasures find a safe, and relevant, home at the Passaic County Historical Society, where future generations of visitors can continue to enjoy them.

Note: My sources are personal memories, and family stories passed down from my grandfather, John Canfield Howe. I've also quoted from a December 4th 1903 article in the New York Times.

***New Local History
Publication***
**Images of America:
Prospect Park**

**Join us at Lambert Castle on
February 21 at 2 pm.
Meet the authors and hear
some of the stories they uncovered
about Prospect Park, NJ.**

**Books will be available for purchase
and the authors will be available for signing
at the conclusion of the program.**



THE JERSEY DERBY: ANOTHER PATERSON FIRST

By Robert L. Cohen

The Jersey Derby, also in its history called the Jersey Stakes and the Jersey Handicap, was one of the most prominent events on the Thoroughbred horse racing calendar, at a time when Thoroughbred racing was a more popular sport than it is today.

In 1948 the colt Citation, one of the greatest Thoroughbreds in racing history, won this heralded event. He had won the Triple Crown (the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont) and also won the Jersey Stakes, two weeks after winning the roses in Louisville. Citation then went on to win the white carnations two weeks later in New York City. An amazing achievement. Other winners of this event included: Jaipur, In Reality, Spend a Buck and Da Hoss. In 1967 another top flight horse, Dr. Fager, won but was disqualified.

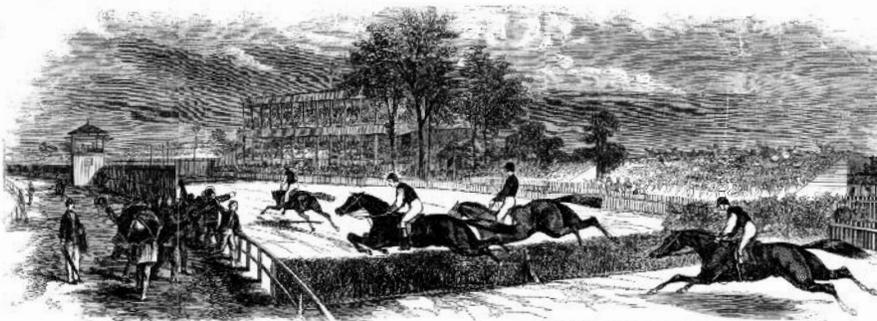
In 1985, after winning the Kentucky Derby, Spend a Buck's owners went after the two million dollar prize offered by the newly rebuilt Garden State Park in Cherry Hill, N.J. The prize would be presented to the winner of the Cherry Hill Mile, Garden State Stakes, Kentucky Derby and the Jersey Derby. After passing up a chance at the Preakness, the

Jersey based colt was entered into the Jersey Derby and won. The two million dollar prize was the richest prize in racing history up to that time.

Where did this historic race begin? On June 7, 1864, the second day of the annual meeting of the Passaic County Agricultural Society, the first Jersey Derby was run at a racetrack in Paterson, N.J. The race was one and a half miles and was open to fillies and geldings, as well as colts. The prize was a thousand dollars, with a fifty dollar entry fee. The first Jersey Derby winner was Norfolk. The mile and a half race was completed in two minutes and forty-six and a half seconds.

From 1880 until 1942 the Jersey Derby was discontinued. It was re-established at Garden State Park and has also been held in Atlantic City. In 1942, the race was called the Jersey Handicap. By the time this event was renamed the Jersey Stakes in 1948,

the race had become less prominent. Since 1999 it has been run on the turf at Monmouth Park in Oceanport, for improving three year olds who have potential to become stakes contenders.



The Meeting of the Passaic County Agricultural Society, at Paterson, N.J. June 25th, 16th, and 7th - The Third Day - Huddle Race - Zigzag and Nannie Cradock Clearing the Huddle on the Home Stretch

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's probably true that an appreciation for history is acquired through learning. Many of us remember a significant teacher, person, event, or historic site that sparked our interest. In many cases, these experiences occurred earlier rather than later in life.

For me, it was my father's passion for military history. As a family, we travelled to sites up and down the East Coast, attending conferences of the Company of Military Historians. My father, in turn, developed part of his own interest in history right here at Lambert Castle. He volunteered at the Castle in the late 1940s and early 1950s, including climbing inside the display cases to clean them - he was the only one that would fit, according to County Historian Ed Smyk!

Today, it seems - at least to me - that our young people are not getting a proper dose of history in school, particularly local history. It is our schools, very often, where children are first exposed to history. With today's emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), history appears to be taking a back seat to these

important subjects. The need for STEM coursework is a legitimate one for our nation (I'm a licensed engineer), but we cannot leave the stories and lessons of the past in the dust. A person educated in historical facts and their impact on our world is in a much better position to make good decisions in their lives and careers.

As the PCHS moves forward, I plan to renew our efforts in reaching out to the schools of Passaic County. We have a tremendous Board of Trustees, including many experienced educators. I'm hoping we can double our school visits to the Castle. I'm also hoping we can develop some new programs geared to younger children. Perhaps you might like to help us in this initiative. If so, let us know!

Finally, on behalf of the Passaic County Historical Society, I want to thank each of you for your continued support in 2015. We have many events and exhibits planned - your membership dues make these activities possible.

Glenn Corbett

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PATERSON, NJ
PERMIT NO. 132

PASSAIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Lambert Castle, 3 Valley Road
Paterson, New Jersey 07503



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- February 13, Friday** **Valentine's Day Masked Ball at Lambert Castle.** 7p.m. - 10 p.m. Don a mask and join us at Lambert Castle for some dancing. Desserts will be served. Cash Bar. Semi-formal attire requested. Tickets \$25 per person. No one under twenty-one years will be admitted. Reservations required. Call (973)247-0085 ext 201
- February 14, Saturday** **PCHS Genealogy Club Meeting.** 10 a.m. at Lambert Castle. Program: *Two Early Cemeteries: Ringwood Manor and Erskine and the History of the Dutch Church (1816) at Boardville-Ringwood*, presented by Ralph Colfax.
- February 14, Saturday** **Make your own Victorian Valentine.** 1p.m. - 4p.m. at Lambert Castle. Join us at Lambert Castle on Valentine's Day and make your own Victorian style Valentine. Learn about early Valentine cards and the evolution of the holiday. Regular museum admission applies.
- February 21, Saturday** **Images of America: Prospect Park Book Signing.** 2 p.m. at Lambert Castle. Come and meet the authors of *Images of America: Prospect Park* as they talk about some of the interesting stories they unearthed in their research. A book signing will follow the program. Regular museum admission applies.
- March 14, Saturday** **PCHS Genealogy Club Meeting.** 10 a.m. at Lambert Castle. Program: *What's New at the New Jersey Archives*, presented by Catherine Medich, Archivist NJ Archives.
- April 4, Saturday** **Make your own Spring Basket.** 1p.m. - 4p.m. at Lambert Castle. Join us at Lambert Castle and make your own Spring basket. Regular museum admission applies.
- April 11, Saturday** **PCHS Genealogy Club Meeting.** 10 a.m. at Lambert Castle. Program presented by Genealogist and Family Historian Lisa Ilowite - *Who was Madeline's Father*.
- April 24 to 26** **Lambert Castle Victorian Tea.** Join us this spring for our annual Victorian Tea at Lambert Castle. Seat times and program TBA.
Friday - Sunday

Visit lambertcastle.org for the most up-to-date event information.
