

THISTLE



Millburn-
Short Hills
Historical Society

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February, 1980

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

February 13, 1980 - 8:00 pm

The third membership meeting of the Society since October will be held Wednesday, February 13, at 8:00 pm at the Millburn Public Library. Mr. Robert Daeschler, a long-time resident of Short Hills and an expert on antiques, will speak on "The Evidence of Age and Authenticity." Bob is well known to many members as a very popular speaker on the subject of antiques and as one of the founders of the Millburn-Short Hills Historical Society.

DIAL CHANNEL 13 - Beginning in February, Channel 13's N.J. Nightly News (6:30-7:00 pm week nights, 6:00-6:30 pm weekends) will broadcast 30-second features on the history and culture of our state. The February topic is George Washington in New Jersey, and photographs and accounts from this area will be included. If, after viewing the Channel 13 features, you have suggestions relevant to those 30-second "spots", please contact Fran Land (379-3376).

CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS - Jan Weisblat, corresponding secretary, wrote to all Millburn civic associations this past fall inviting them to send representatives to Society board meetings. At January's board meeting, representatives from Wyoming, Deerfield, Old Short Hills Estates and the Short Hills Association attended and were asked to share their concerns. We look forward to continued attendance at Board meetings by civic association representatives.

BISHOP JOHN HENRY HOBART

In the name of its public buildings and thoroughfares lie clues to the history of a town. Did you realize that Hobart Avenue, Hobart Gap Road and Bishop's Lane in the Short Hills section commemorate an Episcopal clergyman who last walked here over 150 years ago?

The unique position of John Henry Hobart as rector of Trinity Church in New York City and Bishop of New York from 1816-1830 along with his energy, intelligence and extraordinary devotion to the Church, combined to make him one of the most influential individuals in the United States in the first 30 years of the 19th century.

The youngest of nine children of Enoch and Hannah Hobart, John Henry was born in 1775 in Philadelphia. Through the sacrifices of his widowed mother he was educated at Princeton, graduating in 1793 at the age of 18. After a brief career in business, he returned to Princeton for training in theology. One of his first pastoral assignments was in New Brunswick, and in 1800 he married Mary Goodin Chandler of Elizabeth-town. That same year Hobart began his affiliation with Trinity Church in New York as assistant minister. From the beginning he seems to have made his presence felt as a preacher and in the legislative councils of the Protestant Episcopal Church which had suffered during and after the Revolution because of its close relations with the Church of England. Young Hobart sought to vindicate and defend his church, writing numerous apologetic and instructional treatises for clergy and laymen.

Believing strongly in the necessity for an educated ministry, Hobart was instrumental in the establishment of the General Theological Seminary and when it opened on 9th Avenue in Manhattan, he became professor of pastoral theology. Hobart College also owed much to him, a debt recognized in 1852 when the original name of Geneva College was changed to its present one.

A vast territory came under Hobart's administration as Bishop of all of New York state, a territory extended even further during the brief periods when he gave provisional episcopal care to New Jersey and Connecticut as well. His travels as Bishop were frequent and far-flung in a time when transportation in this country was still rudimentary. Detroit and Baltimore were on his itinerary, and it was on his way back to Short Hills from a visit to Rochester in 1830 that he became fatally ill. Chroniclers say that mourners with tearful eyes were visible in the towns and villages through

which the body of this dynamic man was borne en route from Auburn where he died to New York City where he was buried.

A history of Trinity Church tells us that in 1808 John Henry Hobart purchased a "pleasantly wooded estate near Springfield, N.J. which he named Short Hills." In fact, the Short Hills were named long before Hobart came their way, but he did purchase 175 acres of farmland near the intersection of the present Hobart Avenue and Bishop's Lane. Some of Hobart's land extended across the Morris Turnpike into Summit, but he built his wooden farmhouse on the Short Hills side. It was the custom of the Bishop and his family to leave their Varrick Street house in the city to spend summers at this pleasant country seat at "the Hills" which afforded him rest and quiet and "the enjoyment of a garden which he dearly loved."

In the Hobart correspondence are numerous bills and letters concerning purchases for the Short Hills gardens and orchards. The Bishop and his friends often exchanged seeds or cuttings, and when he went to Europe for his health, he sent his wife spring bulbs from Amsterdam as well as a herbarium of Alpine plants. The hillsides of the Bishop's farm were said to glow with roses, lilies, phlox and honeysuckle. Perhaps a cedar of Lebanon planted by the Bishop or some of the locust trees he admired and recommended to all may yet be standing on the property. The original wooden farmhouse burned and the farm itself was sub-divided before the turn of the century.

The elevation of the Hobart farm was over 400 ft., and the story goes that on a clear day the steeple of old Trinity Church - 180 ft. high - could be plainly seen. The Bishop used to be signalled from the church spire when his services were unexpectedly required.

In 1828 when poor health threatened to cut short the Bishop's career in the Church, he wrote his wife that he would be happy to retire to Short Hills, but he felt that his responsibilities to the Lord required that he make an effort to get well and return to his duties.

When General Theological Seminary was in the planning stage, Hobart - concerned with its proper location - suggested a part of his land in Short Hills as a likely site. He thought it would provide a quiet place not too remote from a large city, but in 1817 Church officials finally settled on New York City as the best place for a ministerial training ground. It is interesting to contemplate what might have been in Short Hills if the Bishop had prevailed.

CALENDAR

- February - American History Month
Feb. 13 - Membership Meeting. Speaker: Mr. Robert Daeschler on "The Evidence of Age and Authenticity."
March 13 - National Trust film, "Main Street"
May - Society's history prizes given at Millburn Senior High School awards ceremony.
May 14 - Annual Meeting. Speaker: Mr. Thomas Fleming on the Battle of Springfield.
June 1 - Annual Members' Gathering

200th Anniversary Celebration of Battle of Springfield

- June 8 - Guided bus tours of historic Millburn
June 19 - Band concert in Taylor Park
June 21 - Battle of Springfield parade
June 22 - Battle activities at Meisel Field

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