



The Communiqué

The Historical Society of Plainfield
Drake House Museum

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Please note - this edition was scheduled to be mailed in early March. This is a pre-pandemic edition.

President's Message – James Madison Drake

By Nancy A. Piowar

Over the winter holidays, the Drake House Museum had two special visitors from North Carolina. They were descendants of the Estes Family who hid James Madison Drake, Nathaniel Drake's great-grandson, from Confederate soldiers in 1864.

During the Civil War, James Madison Drake was taken as a prisoner of war on May 16, 1864, when Company D, 9th NJ Infantry, was surrounded by Confederate soldiers. He spent time in Libby Prison. On October 6, 1864, Drake, along with three other Union officers, jumped from a fast-moving train that was taking 600 prisoners from Charleston to Columbia, South Carolina. Drake and his comrades made their way through three Confederate states, and one thousand miles later, returned safely to the Union lines in Tennessee.

Along the way, Drake met up with Confederate "deserters" in the Blue Ridge Mountain area in North Carolina, and one of them belonged to the Estes family.

Polly Estes, the wife of one of the "deserters", took care of Drake by hiding him in her potato cave (holler.) There is so much more to Drake's story, but suffice it to say, J. M. Drake never forgot Polly or her family. According to the Estes descendants, Drake sent Polly a dress and bonnet so that she could attend his Medal of Honor ceremony in Elizabeth, NJ, in 1873. Through the years, he also sent Polly and her family letters, cards, invitations to family events, and other precious items.

James Madison Drake story continues to be told in North Carolina by members of the Estes Family, and the holler where JM Drake was hidden is still in the Estes Family. It was an honor to show members of the Estes Family the Drake House Museum, and please stop by the Drake House and take a look at the exhibit board that was donated by Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Save the date!

Postponed

March 28, 2020 @ 10:30 AM

"Sojourner Truth"

April 19, 2020 @ 2:00 PM

"Lost Fort of the Plainfield's"

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"Lost Fort of the Plainfield's" lecture – POSTPONED

On Sunday, April 19, 2020, at 2:00PM at the Drake House Museum, John Daniel will give a lecture on the "Lost Fort of the Plainfields." John Daniel is a descendant of the Vermeule Family of North Plainfield, and he will speak about the Blue Hills Militia Post.

People drive by and through the Blue Hills Militia Post and Encampment everyday with little thought of how significant this area was during the Revolutionary War era. The Blue Hills Post and Encampment consisted of 85 acres from South Second Street to the Green Brook and past Compton Avenue and almost to Clinton Avenue.

Most of the area is now Union County Green Brook Park. The camp was established in December 1777 and the garrison fluctuated from 1,000 to 2,000 men. The militias of Morris and Sussex Counties and the First Essex Regiment and the First Somerset were stationed at the post.

Cornelius C. Vermeule considers: "The ground on which your city stands is indeed hallowed." He lists the names of men who bore arms: Deacon Nathaniel Drake's sons, Abraham, Cornelius, and Isaac; son-in-law, Benjamin Manning; Nehemiah Fitz Randolph; Luke Covert and his four sons, Eder, Peter, John and Luke, Jr.; John and Peter Marselis and Levi Lenox, "all living close to the fort." Caesar, the Drake's freed slave also served the Revolutionary War in captain Davison's Brigade.



Did you know??

The Drake House Museum has had the same open hours (Sundays 2PM - 4PM) since April 23, 1995?

[Closed until Further Notice -due to the Pandemic]



Become Part of a Team

Would you like to become part of a team? Do you like volunteering? Want to meet new people? Would you like to make a difference? If the answer is yes, then come serve as a Volunteer for the Historical Society of Plainfield.

Anyone interested in serving as a volunteer is encouraged to call the Drake House Museum for more information at (908) 755-5831 or send an email to drakehouseplainfieldnj@gmail.com.

Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of Department of State through a grant administered by the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs, Department of Parks and Recreation; a 2019 HEART (History, Education, Arts Reaching Thousands) Grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders; the City of Plainfield; the Plainfield Cultural and Heritage Commission; the Hyde and Watson Foundation; the McCutchen Foundation; and the Gannett Foundation.

Upcoming Events

The Historical Society of Plainfield was the recipient of a 2019 HEART grant for education and history programs. The Society will be collaborating with the Plainfield Public Library on two of the programs which will take place in February and March 2020.

"Dismantling the Racism Machine" by Karen Gaffney, Ph.D., will take place on Saturday, February 29, 2020, at 10:30 AM at the Plainfield Public Library. This program is also funded by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. Karen Gaffney is the author of *"Dismantling the Racism Machine: A Manual and Toolbox,"* an accessible introduction to race and racism with tools for action. She is an English professor at Raritan Valley Community College, where she teaches courses on composition, gender, and race. She facilitates anti-racism workshops in the community and at conferences, and she runs a blog with resources, *Divided No Longer*, which works to call out white supremacy, understand it, and dismantle it.

Postponed – To Be Reschedule in the Future

The year of 2020 is the centennial of Women's Suffrage. On March 28, 2020, at 10:30 AM at the Plainfield Public Library, Dr. Daisy Century will give a passionate and inspiring portrayal of the life and legacy of "Sojourner Truth." Sojourner Truth began speaking out for women's suffrage in 1850.

Dr. Century as "Sojourner Truth" comes from the American Historical Theatre in Philadelphia. Dr. Daisy Century and Ms. Sojourner Truth are both powerful singers and very intelligent women, whether self-taught or academically trained. Almost as impressively tall as the woman she portrays, Dr. Century gives a commanding performance of Ms. Truth, bringing to life a woman undeterred by incredible obstacles, a woman who mixed with the leading figures of her day, including Susan B. Anthony, Abraham Lincoln, and Ulysses S. Grant. The audience will have an opportunity to sign Sojourner Truth's Book Life, signifying their connection to Ms. Truth's legacy.

Drake House Tours for Grade Schools

One of the best and most enduring services the Historical Society of Plainfield provides to the community is the guided grade school tours of the Drake House Museum. The tours give children historical context about what they learn in school, and after seeing and touching historical items, history becomes real for them.

Board members and volunteers conduct tours of the Drake House for first through fifth grade classes of Plainfield, North Plainfield, and home school students. It is an amazing journey for the students to learn that the Drake House was originally a 4 room farmhouse built in 1746 (before the Revolutionary War.) The children learn about the colonial period in America's history by experiencing a colonial kitchen and bedroom. They learn about George Washington's visit to the Drake home and see the actual room where

he and his officers planned the Battle of Short Hills.

The children are also introduced to Civil War history through viewing artifacts and the paintings of Civil War hero and artist, Julian Scott. Students learn about the influences of the Victorian period as evidenced in the Library and Ball Room, both added on to the Drake House during the Victorian era.

Educational handouts are given to the children and teachers to enhance their educational visit, and we receive appreciation and thanks year after year from our schools. Often we receive children whose parents remember visiting the Drake House when the parent was in grade school. What a wonderful legacy, one the Historical Society of Plainfield hopes to continue to provide to our students, teachers and community for many more years to come.

- Postponed - To Be Rescheduled in the Future

DR.DAISY CENTURY AS "SOJOURNER TRUTH"

A passionate and inspiring portrayal of the life
and legacy of Ms. Sojourner Truth.

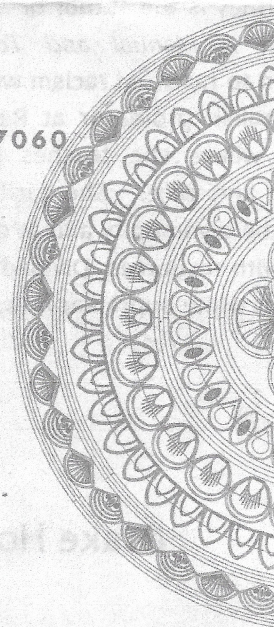
SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2020

10:30 AM

**PLAINFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY
ANNE LOUISE DAVIS ROOM**

800 PARK AVENUE, PLAINFIELD, NJ 07060

Free!
Open to the Public!
Attendees will have the opportunity to sign Sojourner Truth's Book of Life, signifying their connection to Ms. Truth's legacy.



HOSTED BY: THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PLAINFIELD/
DRAKE HOUSE MUSEUM AND PLAINFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY*

*THIS HISTORY AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IS MADE
POSSIBLE IN PART BY A 2019 HEART (HISTORY, EDUCATION,
ARTS REACHING THOUSANDS) GRANT FROM THE UNION
COUNTY BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS.

Please be advised due to the on-going public health situation, programs are subject to change without advance notice. Check the website for the latest and up-to-date information.

www.drakehouseplainfieldnj.org