

# Ridge History Club's ABCs of Bernards Township

*Research assistance provided by The  
Historical Society of Somerset Hills*

# A is for Astor

- The man for which the estate is named, Colonel John Jacob Astor IV, never actually lived in the house due to his unfortunate death in the sinking of the Titanic in April of 1912.
- It was instead owned by the Owens family, who called their mansion "Cedar Hill". The Owens' let all of the townspeople picnic in their woods, and planted 35 acres with 5,000 peach and 1,500 apple trees. Cedar Hill Farm provided summer jobs for local students and at harvest time, for residents.
- In 1940, the Owens' sold their estate to the Lee family, who owned the Red Devil Tool Company. In 1946, their land was divided in two, and John Jacob Astor VI purchased 11.3 acres of it. In the mid-50s, Lee donated 60 acres of land to Bernards Township Board of Education to build Cedar Hill School and Ridge High School and their athletic fields which have been named Lee Field and Astor Field respectively. An additional 12 acres were sold to create War Memorial Field. The house itself, commonly called the Astor Mansion after its last owner, is now the location of the Bernards Township government.



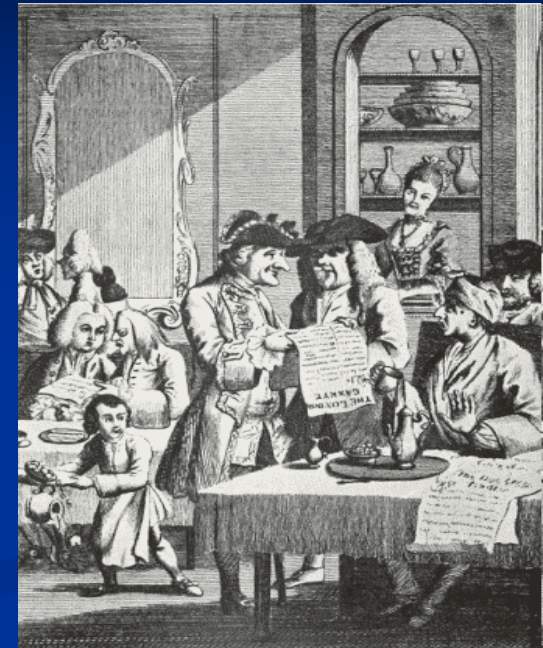
# B is for Brick Academy

- The school was meant to educate young men desiring to enter into ministry, law, education, or public service. Local boys and boys from NYC were given a classical education at this school, where they were prepared to go to college at "The College of New Jersey", which is now known as "Princeton University". There were two buildings near the Brick Academy that they used as dormitories, and other students who were not local also boarded with local residents.
- 1762 : Kennedy moved the school to a farmstead four miles south of the village.
- 1809 : Reverend Robert Finely organized the building of a new two story brick schoolhouse located in the center of the village.
- 1853: School District #12 in Basking Ridge opens in the Brick Academy building as a public school.
- 1924 Bernards Township rents building for municipal offices
- 1975: Bernards Township government moves to former Astor estate at 1 Collyer Lane
- 1976 :Township leases Brick Academy to The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills
- 1976: Brick Academy listed on National Register of Historic Places
- 2009 Bicentennial Celebration of the 200 year birthday of the Brick Academy



# C is for Coffee House

- In Basking Ridge there used to be a Coffee house called the 1804 House. It was located on Madisonville Road. It was used as coffee house, as well as a tavern. This small coffee shop always was filled with excitement and entertainment for the local communities and farms in the early 19th century. The name “Madisonville Coffee House” appears on a map dating to 1818. At that time it was being operated as a tavern. It is believed that Continental Army soldiers, perhaps including General George Washington, stopped in for coffee, which is how it received the name “Coffee House.”

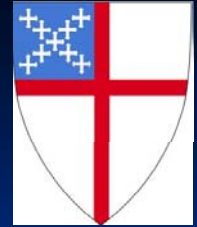


# D is for Dr. Whitnaul

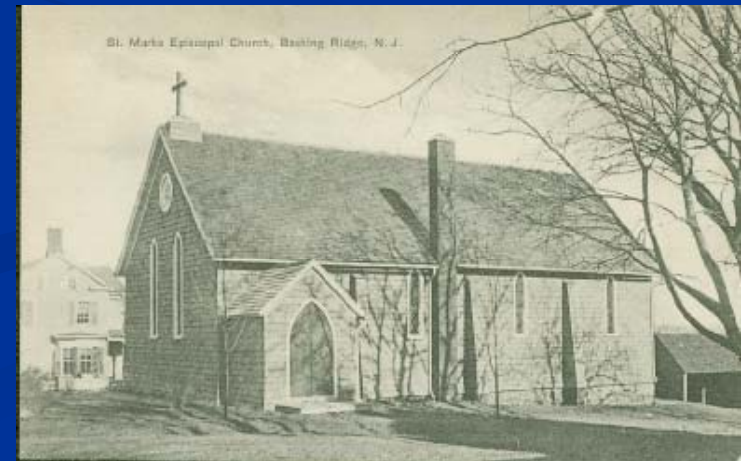
- Dr. Horatio Gates Whitnaul was a very important figure in Bernards Township.
- He was a surgeon for the Union Army in the Civil War and lived in a house on South Finley Avenue where the Bank of America is located today.
- His total property was 106 acres, and his home was one of the grandest mansions in the village of Basking Ridge. The property included the present campus of Oak Street School, and a very fashionable cast iron fence unlike the other houses in the neighborhood, which had wooden picket fences. He was the wealthiest landowner in Basking Ridge.



# E is for Episcopal Church

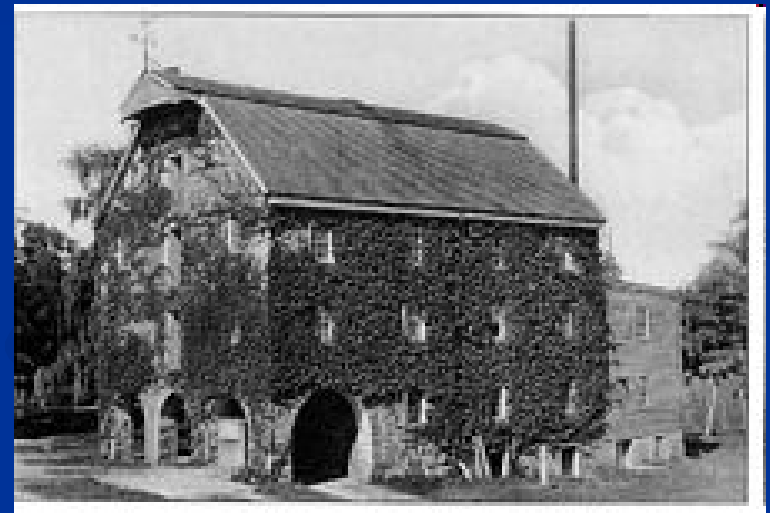


- St. Mark's was founded in 1850 by the rector of St. Peter's, Morristown, NJ. The original Church, the present-day Chapel, was consecrated in May, 1853.
- St. Mark's is the oldest Episcopal Church in the Somerset Hills area. St. Mark's became a self-sustaining parish in 1950 and Father Norman Post was installed as the first Rector in 1950.
- In 1968 the rectory was moved to its present location and a new church was built on the original rectory site, next door to the Chapel. The Church is adorned with 16 stained glass windows that were designed by Father Norman Post. Each window includes two different religious symbols in the small space at the top of each arch. After Father Post's death in 1977, Father Stephen Rozzelle was called in 1978 as St. Mark's second rector, where he remained until 2006
- The original chapel remains today and is incorporated as an integral part of the facilities.



# F is for Franklin Corners

- Franklin corners is a historical district that includes places like Samuel Johnson House, Van Dorn's Mill, and Franklin Corner School. It is north of Bernardsville on Hardscrabble and Child Roads.
- The Franklin Corners district is a part of the national register of historic districts. It is a historical site because the government wants to recognize an example of the architecture used at the time when Franklin Corners was created. It spans 470 acres and contains 11 buildings.
- The Franklin Corners district was prominent from 1750-1899. The Franklin Corners district will always serve as a reminder of the society that has passed, its' architectural style, and its' sophistication.



# G is General Lee

- General Lee was the second in command to General George Washington in the Revolutionary War.
- He did not follow Washington's orders to march to Trenton, but was captured by the British in Widow White's Tavern during the Revolutionary War.
- The Patriots won the Battle of Trenton and the course of the war changed, giving us our independence from Great Britain!



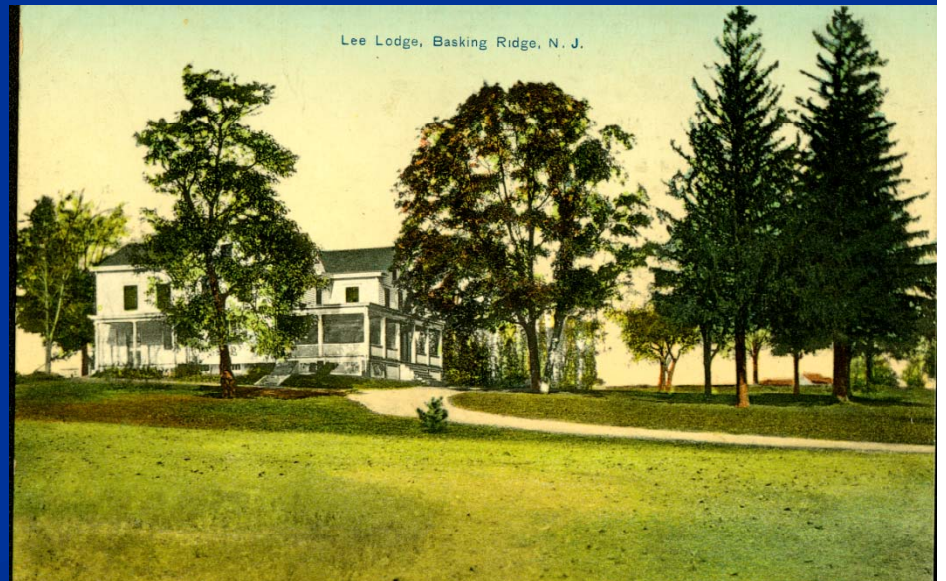
# H is for The Hills

- The construction of the Hills development started in 1994. The development spans the 1800 acre hill portion between Bernards Township and Bedminster.
- The Hills was created because of the Mount Laurel court decisions that said that all New Jersey municipalities (townships) must provide the opportunity for housing to low and middle income families.
- The Hills dramatically increased the population of Bernards Township because of its' ideal location near I 287 (a highway), I-78 (a highway), and corporate complexes like the former AT&T headquarters.
- This sudden increase in the population created the need for a new elementary school (Mount Prospect) and recreational facilities like basketball courts, tennis courts, a swimming pool, etc. The Hills thus had a huge impact upon Bernards Township.



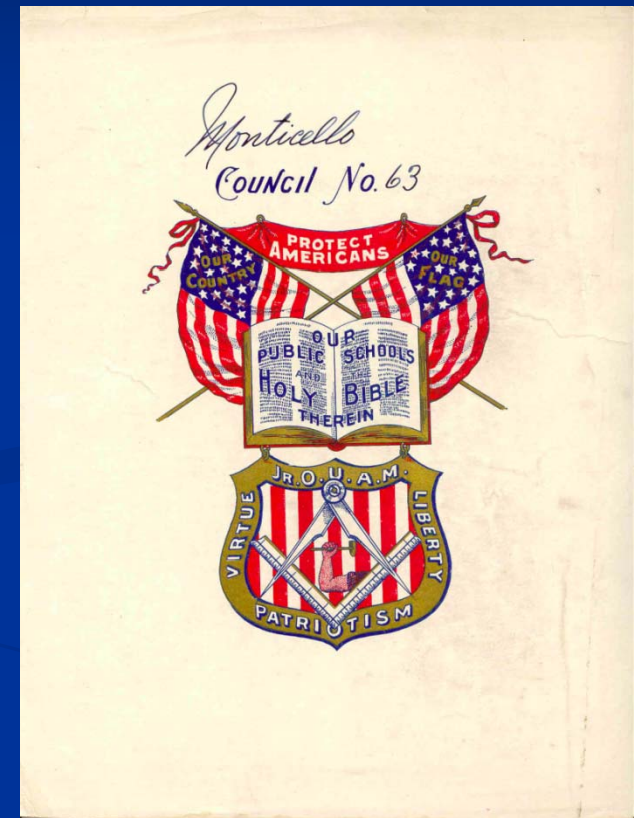
# I is for Inns and Taverns

- In the 18th Century, it was required that towns construct taverns that could provide food, drinks, and lodging to passers-by. Bullions tavern witnessed encampment in 1781 of over 4000 French troops on property now the English family farmstead in Liberty Corner.
- White's Tavern, in Basking Ridge, was another important tavern for troops. At this site in 1776 General Charles Lee was taken prisoner by a British patrol. A private home is currently located on the site.



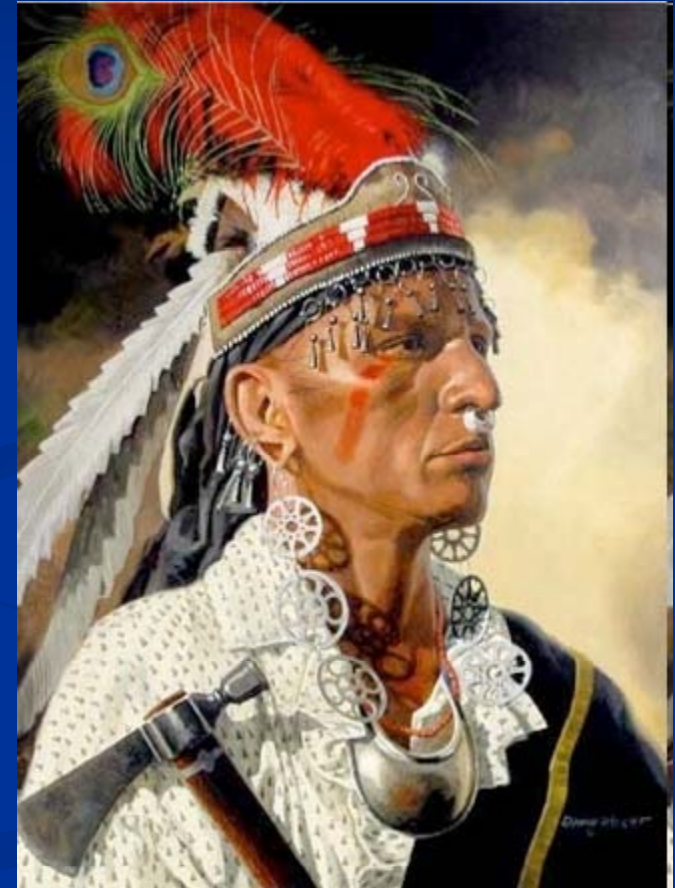
# J is for Junior Order of United American Mechanics

- The Junior Order of United American Mechanics used to own the Brick Academy along with another organization until it sold it in 1945.
- The United American mechanics was founded in Philadelphia in 1845. It was created as an organization to combat against labor pressure from immigrants like the Irish, Germans, and Roman Catholics.
- Its' members were white from the ages of 16-50 and at the group's peak its' membership reached 200,000 members.
- It helped to establish a Sick and Funeral Fund and to maintain the Public School System.
- In the twentieth century it started to lose it's prominence until it had only 25,000 members left.



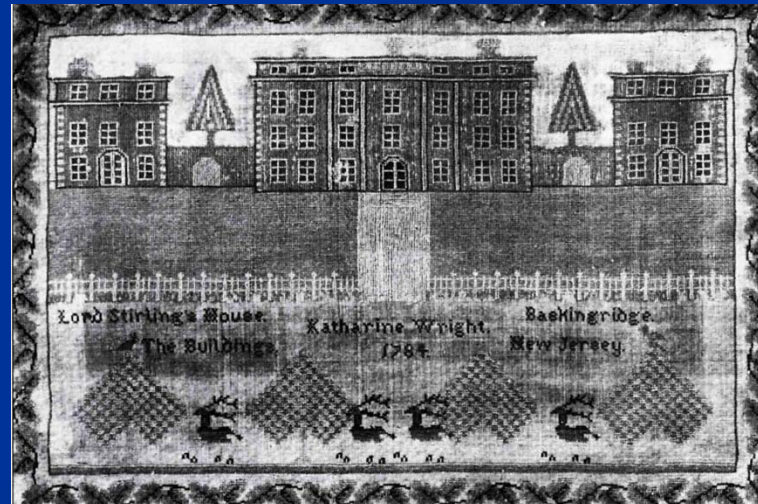
# K is for Kinnan

- Mary Lewis Kinnan was a Basking Ridge heroine who lived from 1763-1848.
- She was married to Joseph Kinnan, a veteran from the Revolutionary War in 1779. They lived happily in Basking Ridge for the next 9 years with their two sons.
- The Kinnan's then moved to Western Virginia where Mary had 2 more daughters. One evening in 1791 Shawnee Indians invaded the Kinnan's cabin. Mary's visiting brother, Jacob Lewis was able to flee with his two nephews. However, the rest of the family was not as lucky. Mary's husband and two daughters were killed during the attack and Mary was taken hostage.
- During her captivity, the Shawnee forced Mary to walk with them to Ohio where she was able to send a letter to her brother back in Basking Ridge. Unfortunately, the courier became sick and the letter was lost for 6 months before eventually reaching its destination. Jacob Lewis read his sister's plea for help to the congregation of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, and they gladly donated to fund his rescue mission.
- Jacob Lewis was able to sneak into the Shawnee Camp in the Detroit area and rescue his sister, bringing her back home to Basking Ridge after 3 years and 5 months in captivity. She died many years later as a hero and was buried in the Cemetery of the Presbyterian Church next to her son, Jacob. Even today you can think of her when passing Lewis Street and Kinnan Way in Bernards Township, as they were named in her honor.



# L is for Lord Stirling

- Lord Stirling's real name was William Alexander. He claimed Scottish nobility. He was born on December 27, 1723 in New York and died on January 15, 1783 at age 57. Stirling was a Major General in the Continental Army, and as one of George Washington's trusted generals, led several important battles in the American Revolution. During the Battle of Long Island, his troops were outnumbered three to one, but his covering action against the superior British forces allowed a section of the American army to escape, even though Stirling himself was taken prisoner.
- Lord Stirling's estate, Stirling Manor, was built in Basking Ridge in 1761. Local people called it The Buildings, because of its size; the road was called Building Lane. The name was changed in the early 1940s to Lord Stirling Road. Stirling's estate was General Nathaniel Greene's headquarters in 1777.



# M is for Maple Avenue School

- Maple Avenue School was the public school in Basking Ridge between 1903 and 1969. It stood where the Bernards Township Library stands now. The Library owns some of the original school benches, which are located in the lobby.

*Fun Fact:* The bell the Library uses to tell everyone that it is closing time, is the original school house bell they used to tell the kids that recess was over.



# N is for Nowenoik

- In 1701, the governor of East New Jersey lived in England and couldn't come himself to buy land. Instead, he sent an agent named John Harrison. 16 years later, on June 24, 1717, John Harrison purchased about 3,000 acres from the Indian chief, Nowenoik. He paid \$50, which was more than twice what was paid for the purchase of all of Manhattan Island. The 3,000 acres purchased from Nowenoik is the core of Bernards Township today.



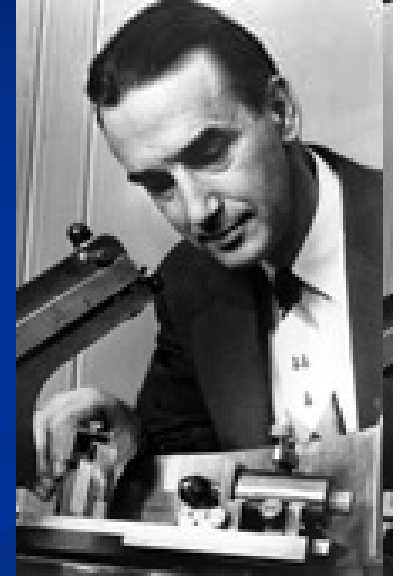
# O is for Old Mill Inn

- Samuel Lewis who is the founder of the Grain House and the Old Mill Inn was a miller from Franklin Corners in Basking Ridge. This hotel and restaurant in Basking Ridge have been around for 240 years.
- Lewis established a mill on the site of the present mill in 1768 on land originally acquired from William Penn. The present stone mill that replaced the original mill was constructed in 1843. This historic building, once a barn that stored grain for General Washington's troops during the revolutionary war, was originally located across Route 202 next to a stone mill that still stands today opposite the restaurant.
- What was the wagon and machinery room is now the William Childs Dining Room. The grain storage area that fed Washington's army is now The Grain Room.



# P is for Pearson

- Gerald Pearson was born in Salem, Oregon on March 31 1905 and lived in Basking Ridge from 1945-1960.
- He was a scientist who worked for a company called Bell Labs. He worked on inventing a device called a transistor. A transistor is a device used all electronics. It is used to switch electronic signals or amplify (increase) electronic signals within a machine.
- While working at Bell Labs he worked with Daryl Chapin and Calvin Fuller to create the silicon solar cell. The silicon solar cell is the first practical device that converts solar energy (energy from the sun) into electrical energy. The silicon solar cell is important today because it has many uses which include being the power source for satellite communications.
- Gerald Pearson lived in our town with his family but left in 1960 to become a professor of electrical engineering at Stanford University in California.
- He received many awards, including a membership in the American Physical Society, a membership in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, life membership in the Franklin Institute, life membership in the Telephone Pioneers of America, John Scott Medal from the City of Philadelphia, the John Price Wetherill Medal from the Franklin Institute, the Marian Smoluchowski Medal from the Polish Physical Society, the Solid State Science and Technology Medal and Award from the Electrochemical Society, the GaAs Symposium Award, the Heinrich Welker Medal, and the Alfried von Bohlen and Halbach Energy Research Prize.



# Q is for Quincy

- Eliza Susan Morton Quincy, the second daughter of John Morton, was a resident of Basking Ridge during the Revolutionary War.
- Her husband, the honorable Josiah Quincy of Boston, was a president of Harvard, mayor of Boston, and member of Congress.
- Eliza described Basking Ridge as, “a retired, pleasant situation enclosed by some high land called ‘the Long Hills’” in her book, *Basking Ridge in Revolutionary Days*. This recollection of her memories of the Revolutionary War, which occurred when she was a child, was privately printed as a “Memoir” of her life in 1861.
- However, a portion of it was reprinted under its current name by the Basking Ridge Historical Society for the 200th anniversary of the founding of Basking Ridge. The most well-known part of this book was its description of the capture of General Lee on December 13, 1776.



# R is for Ridge High School

- Ridge High School was built in 1961. It originally had only 12 classrooms, four science laboratories, a art room and a music room. It also had a library, gymnasium, auditorium, locker room and a administrative office.
- A man by the name of William J. Keeler was the first principal. Lee Field (The football field) is named after the Lee family, who also owned the Red Devil Paint Company, which is why all of Ridge's sport teams are known as the Red Devils.



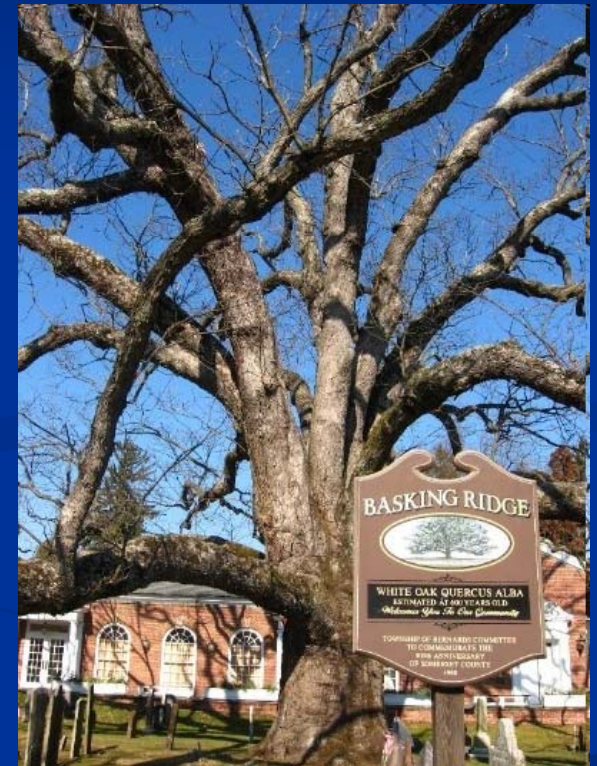
# S is for Store Restaurant

- Formerly the Washington House, The Store was a hotel for much of its life until becoming a full-time restaurant. The Store has had a reputation for giving a Great Deal, since the turn of the century! With the charm of an old fashioned country store, it is part of the community. It is a place for families to enjoy casual meals; A place for their children to work and grow; A gathering spot for local business people to enjoy lunch and a drink after work.



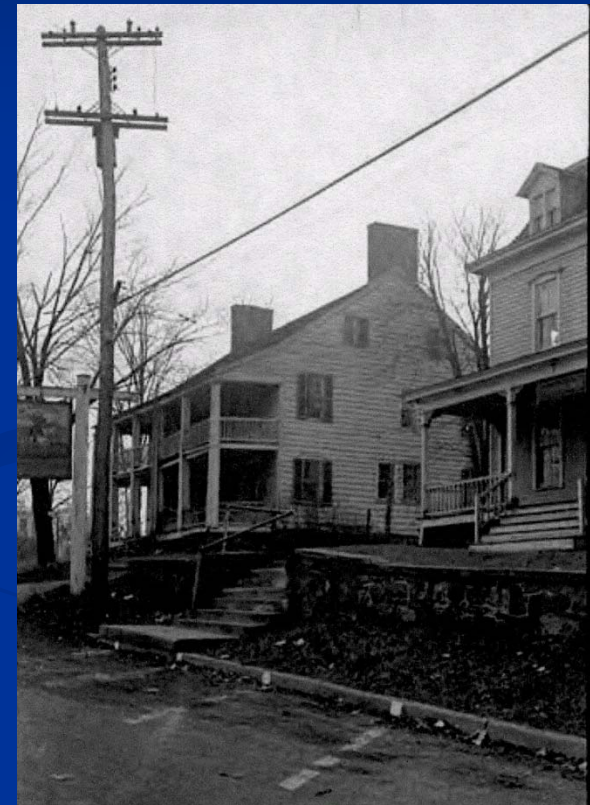
# T is for Oak Tree

- The tree is located in the oldest part of the churchyard, called The Old Yard, where Native Americans camped, George Washington and Lafayette picnicked, and colonial troops rested under the tree. Washington also established a hospital a short distance from the Oak Tree, near North Maple Avenue.
- In 1920, the tree was 600 years old. The Friends of the Oak Tree was organized in 1923 to save the 600 year old oak tree in the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Churchyard. The tree trunk was cleaned of its disease, leaving space for four men to stand in its trunk. Three tons of concrete were poured into the cavity. The tree, a landmark for centuries, is where Bernards Township's logo (two oak leaves) comes from, representing the villages of Basking Ridge and Liberty Corner. The tree is around 90 feet high and in the cemetery where around 830 people are buried.



# U is for Union Hotel

- The Union hotel was a very popular hotel located in the center of town. It was a two-story building with a double chimney, and behind the Union Hotel, there was a station where horses could be rented. When the hotel shut down, the Bishop family lived there. Later it was demolished in order to build the Somerset Hills National Bank, then the First Fidelity Bank. Wachovia bank now stands in the same location that the Union Hotel once occupied.



# V is for Van Dorn Mill

- The Van Dorn grist mill was built by Samuel Lewis in 1768 of wood. It was rebuilt out of stone in 1843. Stones were collected from nearby farms, and builders were paid one dollar per day to build the magnificent structure that stands today.
- This mill ground grain for colonial troops during the revolutionary war, and is said to be one of the finest examples of stone workmanship in the area.
- In 1841, Ferdinand Van Dorn purchased the mill and farm from the Woodwards. He was not satisfied with the mill and decided to build a new one down stream. The original mill still stands on at the corner of Childs Road and Route 202 on the way to Jockey Hollow in Morristown.



# W is for William Annin

- **W is for William Annin**
- In 1766, William Annin, son of John Annin, built an old stone house with rocks from the neighboring quarry.
- Sometime during American Revolution, the name was changed from Annin's Corner to Liberty Corner.
- When the Annin stone house was destroyed, it was located on Lyns Road, north of the Church Street intersection.
- William Annin Middle School and Annin Road were both named for the Annin family.



# X is for X-tremely Important Events

- Capture of General Lee: General Lee was famous in Basking Ridge for being captured by the British at the Widow White's Tavern on December 13, 1776. Lee was declared Guilty, confirmed by Congress and subsequently stripped from his rank.
- Charter Day: Charter Day commemorates the anniversary of the May 24, 1760 granting of a township Charter by King George II of England, establishing Bernardston Township. This act was as a courtesy and in appreciation for the services of Sir Francis Bernard, Royal Governor of New Jersey. From January 27, 1758 to July 4, 1760 Sir Francis Bernard, son of a British Reverend was appointed for two years as Royal Governor of New Jersey.

