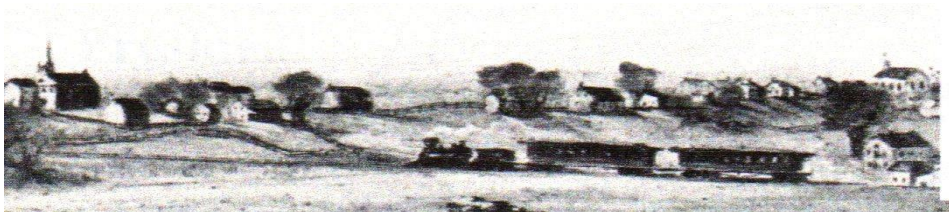


Madison Historical Society

Madison, N.J



April 2023 Newsletter
4th edition 2022-2023

The Madison Historical Society Presents

May 16, 2023

7:00 pm

On Zoom

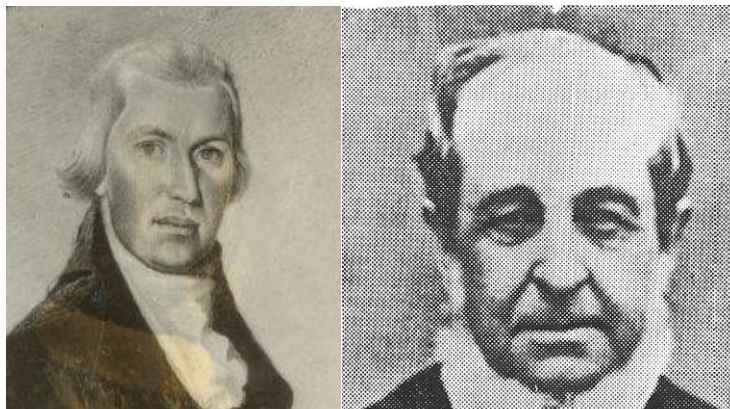
“The Lathrop and Gibbons Families: The Civil War Through the Gilded Age

With

Susan L Simon

For more on Susan and her Talk, see p.3

**William
Gibbons**



**Judge
F.S.
Lathrop**

If you are interested in participating in this presentation, please contact the Madison Historical Society at our website madisonnjhistoricalsociety.org or historicalsociety@rosenet.org. We will need your email address to send you an appropriate link to join the Zoom presentation. Read more about these speakers on page 3

Historical Society Officers

President

Virginia Laughlin

Vice President

Herm Huber

Corresponding

Secretary

Johanna Glazewski

Recording Secretary

Anne Meyer

Treasurer

Jim Malcolm

Custodian

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Howard Craig

Rebecca Fields

Laurie Hagerich

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Noreen McManus

Dorothy Pietrowski

(Emeritus)

Cathy Coultus

(Emeritus)



Message From President Virginia Laughlin

Welcome Spring! As the new season begins, so does our Spring lecture series. In addition to our regular March and April membership programs, we will be holding the Society's Annual Meeting virtually on May 16th where we will be presenting a lecture on The Gibbons and Lathrop Families by Susan Simon. In this edition of the newsletter, you will find the proposed slate of officers for 2023-24. Instructions on how to vote are included and the results of the vote will be announced on the Annual Meeting Zoom call. Please don't forget to cast your vote.

Have you heard that the Madison Library will be closing for renovation? Thus, the Society will be temporarily moving our office to a new location in Madison sometime this summer. Further updates will be provided when we have a firm relocation date.

Work continues on the infrastructure and content planning of the Madison Historical Museum. Please see the appeal in this newsletter for Madison related historical items and objects that you would consider donating to the Museum. Madison has a rich history to tell and we are interested in such things that will help us tell its story.

Enjoy the warmer weather!

A Request as the Madison Historical Museum Moves Forward

The Madison Historical Society is looking for items that tell the story of Bottle Hill/Madison for the new museum. The Madison History Museum will be housed in the East Wing of the Hartley Dodge Memorial Building. If you happen to have old family heirlooms with a Madison story that you would not mind parting with, we would be happy to take them. You can contact us through our website madisonnjhistoricalsociety.org, our email historicalsociety@rosenet.org or by phone 973-377-0722 X 8.



About Our Speaker and Her Talk



Susan is a former two-term President of the Madison Historical Society. She holds a degree in mathematics from Willamette University and a Masters degree from the University of Oregon. During her 39-year teaching career at both the intermediate, high school, and college levels, she was twice nominated for the Tandy Outstanding Teaching Award. Susan has had a long-time interest in genealogy and history and after her 2005 retirement became more intensely active in both fields. In 2015 she was elected president of the Morris Area Genealogical Society and currently serves as one of the organization's Trustees. She has published several articles in the genealogical field and in 2013 was named a member of the First Families of Ohio. Along with her husband she was a resident of Madison for 51 years.

William Gibbons amassed extensive holdings in New Jersey, New York, and Georgia, which were inherited by his children when he died in 1852. His only son, William Heyward Gibbons, was forced to serve the Confederacy in order to save the rice plantations near Savannah, Georgia. Susan Simon will talk about the role played by Isabel Gibbons on the disposition of the Gibbons property during the post-Civil War years. The youngest of the Gibbons children, Isabel married Frank Lathrop, the son of the reverend Judge F.S. Lathrop who was a contemporary and neighbor of William Gibbons. William, you may know, had the Greek revival style country home, now called Mead Hall on the campus of Drew University.

New Slate of Officers for 2023-24 to Vote On

Normally a new slate of officers and trustees for the Historical Society is voted on at the Annual Dinner Meeting. Since the event is not being held this May, we have decided to call upon members to cast their votes on the slate via the newsletter in either of two methods. All votes should be received by April 30th . Method 1: If you receive the newsletter via email, please email your vote for or against the slate at the following email address: historicalsociety@rosenet.org Method 2: If you receive a hard copy of the newsletter by U.S. Mail, please fill out the ballot at the bottom of this page and send it to the following address: Madison Historical Society, P.O. Box 148, Madison 07940. Be sure and put your name on the ballot. If you would rather just email us, you certainly may do so at: historicalsociety@rosenet.org

Madison Historical Society Election Ballot 2023-2024

President: Virginia Laughlin (2 year term)

Treasurer: Dave Luber (1 year term)

Recording Secretary: Laurie Hagerich (2 year term)

Corresponding Secretary: Noreen McManus (2 year term)

Collection Custodian" Kate Malcolm (2 year term)

Historian: Nikolina Uzicanin (2 year term)

Trustee: Doug Simon (3 year term)

Trustee: Johanna Glazewski (3 year term)

Trustee: Rebecca Fields (3 year term)

Trustee: Maureen Byrne (2 year term)

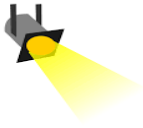
Trustee Jim Malcolm (1 year term)

Trustee: Judy Seery (1 year term)

VOTE ON SLATE **Approve**
 Disapprove

NAME _____

Spotlight on History



The Runaway Nuns and the Madison Riot

Brian Regal, Kean College

This is shortened version of an article written for the new updated edition of the history of Madison, titled *A Portrait of the Rose City, A History of Madison, N.J.*



The strange case of the ‘Runaway Nuns’ and the ‘Madison Riot’ was an early example of the town’s growing connection to the outside world. It began when a woman named Edith O’Gorman came to town to speak about her experiences as a Catholic nun who left the convent—to run away—because of the ill treatment she claimed she received. She wrote a best-selling book, *Convent Life Unveiled* (1871) detailing the ‘depravities’ of the church and went on a speaking tour. On April 14, 1870, she arrived in Madison to tell her story and a riot broke out.

The cause of the largely forgotten Madison Riot has its roots in the wider American, Anti-Catholic movement of the nineteenth century. Anti-Catholic sentiment had a long history in America, and the phenomena of Runaway Nuns really came to wide public attention, for the first time, when in August of 1834, a crowd of Protestants laid siege to the Catholic Ursuline Convent, Mount Benedict, at Charlestown, Massachusetts. The mob was convinced that American women were being held there against their wills and so they attacked it and burned down the convent and its attending orphanage. It was a national scandal with news agencies from one end of the country to another reporting on the events. It would be the first of several Runaway Nun related incidents.

In her autobiography, *Convent Life Unveiled* (1871), Edith O’Gorman wrote the last, and most sober, Runaway Nun story. From infancy, she said, she was “inclined to prayer and piety.” She found no pleasure in everyday life and when she confessed this to her priest, he told her that the only way to save her soul was to join a nunnery. After some balking by her parents (for which the priest called them “agents of the devil”) on October 1, 1862, Edith entered Madison’s St. Elizabeth’s convent.

Following the Runaway Nun tradition, it was not long before Edith was troubled by what she claimed went on inside the convent. She talked of “secrecy” and how the Abbess, Sister Mary Joseph, was a nasty tyrant who mistreated the sisters and that the orphan children of the school were not treated well. This mistreatment allegedly included mercilessly whipping a three-year-old and locking another in a closet until she

had “gone mad.” Edith had a whole list of grievances. In 1864 she was transferred to the new convent in Hudson City (now Bergen Township, New Jersey).

Before long she reached a low point. She hated life at the convent, she hated the other sisters, she hated the priests and she hated the Church in general. Her problem was that even though she felt this way about the institution of the Catholic Church, she felt she could not leave because not only would they not let her leave, but if she did, she would suffer damnation. As a result, she decided to stay with it. New developments would bring events to a head.

She had complained to Mother Xavier about the advances of one of the priests, Father Walsh, but the mother gave her a reply which basically said that the father knew what he was doing, to do what he said, and that Edith could expect no help from her. A short time later, while they were alone together, the priest drugged Edith with the intention of doing her amorous mischief. She awoke at the last second and fled before anything could happen. This was all she could stand. On January 31, 1868, after six years, she slipped out into the cold and ran away, never to return.

On August 29, 1869, she renounced the Catholic Church and became a Protestant. Shortly thereafter, she hit the lecture circuit. Edith O’Gorman’s lectures generally centered on the vague ‘evil’ workings of ‘Romanism’ and addressed parents about what a bad idea it was to send children to Catholic schools because of the poor quality of instruction and because they would be swayed to ‘Popery.’

At her talks there were always a few irate Catholics in the audience, who often made their presence known with heckles, but she had no fear. That changed however, at an April 14, 1870, speech at the Methodist church in Madison, New Jersey. Upon her leaving the church, a crowd gathered around her, many of whom were Catholics angered by her speech. According to the *Morristown Jerseyman* (April 23, 1870), threats were made prior to the talk, and a crowd “out of the Irish element” began shouting and throwing stones. As Edith and her escorts were getting into a carriage, someone in the crowd fired a pistol shot at her. Luckily, the shot hit no one and the group raced away in their carriage with the angry mob in pursuit. Arriving at the home of local Methodists with whom Edith was staying, the crowd pelted the house with rocks. Some supporters, along with students from nearby Drew Seminary, forced the crowd to withdraw and the incident ended.

The so-called Madison Riot (such as it was) launched the case into a new level of controversy. Lines were more clearly drawn and more people, especially the press, took interest. The *Jerseyman* backed Edith. They ran an article next to the report of the riot (April 23, 1870) which hammered home the standard complaints about the “showy, theatrical and alluring forms of the Romish church which has a peculiar charm for children,” and how “the priests spend a great deal of time in these schools making love to the sisters.” The *New York Times* also took Edith’s side. A *Times* article (May 22, 1870) gave a quick rundown of the events, describing Catholics as having “Gathered from miles around in a lawless riot” in a “cowardly attempt to shoot her down.” The article ended by saying that she had been “providentially saved” and was “resolute” in arousing people to the “danger in their midst.”

The Paterson, New Jersey *Daily Guardian* was much less favorable, referring to her as “not an escaped, but an expelled nun” (April 21, 1870.) In the same issue, the paper ran what it purported to be letters from Edith to Mother Xavier begging to be allowed back into the convent because her actions were performed when she was “desperate and crazy.”

Not long after the riot and the newspaper reportage, Edith O’Gorman drifted into obscurity never to be heard from again. Madison residents now realized that the community was not immune to outside influences, however strange or controversial.

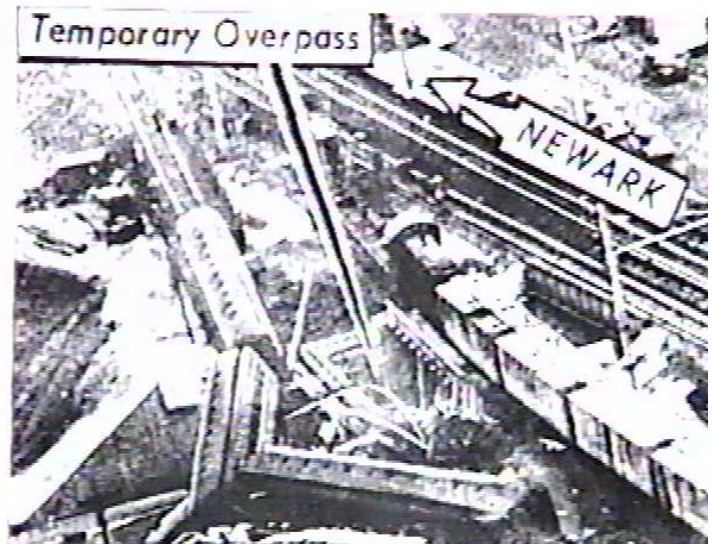
New Jersey’s Deadliest Train Wreck

- Doug Simon

The recent frightening train derailment in Palestine, Ohio, causes us to pause for a moment and recall New Jersey’s deadliest train wreck. It was February 6, 1951 around 5:00 pm when a steam engine pulling roughly a thousand passengers sped along the Pennsylvania Railroad Jersey Central rail line. Many of the passengers were Wall Street employees which provided the impetus to nickname the train “The Broker.”

There was lot of on-going construction along the Central Jersey rail lines with temporary infrastructure put in place to allow the continuance of service. Among other things, temporary wooden trestles were built at several locations. Because of these conditions a notice had been distributed to train engineers in late

January that they were to proceed through Woodbridge not at the normal 60 mph, but a 25 mph. Tragically, the train did not slowdown as it approached Woodbridge. The Broker went into a sharp turn, derailed with several cars plunging down an embankment. Eighty-passengers were killed and hundreds more injured.



The engineer claimed that he had been traveling at only 25 mph, but the post-crash inquiry determined the train was travelling between 50 and 60 mph. The engineer continued working for the railroad but never operated a train again.

A pair of historical markers near the derailment site memorialized the victims.

Sources consulted for this story:

1. “Crowded Commuter Cars Plunge of Rails at Temporary Road Overpass in Woodbridge, *The New York Times*, February 7, 1951.
2. “Great Woodbridge Train Wreck of 1951” <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m-125814> Historical Marker Database.
3. “Resident recalls deadly Woodbridge Train Wreck of 1951, My Central Jersey.” <https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/Middlesex-county/2-16/02/05/resident-recalls-deadly-woodbridge-train-wreck-1951-79640990/>
4. “Woodbridge Train Derailment,” Wikipedia

MADISON HISTORICAL SOCIETY – ITEMS FOR SALE

<i>Book</i>	<i>Non-Member</i>	<i>Member</i>
ALWAYS WITH US	\$15.00	\$13.50
BOTTLE HILL AND MADISON by William Parkhurst Tuttle	\$30.00	\$27.00
CARING FOR YOUR HISTORIC HOUSE by Heritage Preservation & NPS	\$15.00	\$13.50
CIVIL WAR JOURNAL OF PRIVATE HEYWARD EMMELL by Jim Malcolm	\$20.00	\$18.00
COLLEGE OF SAINT ELIZABETH by Sister Mary Ellen Gleason, et al.	\$20.00	\$18.00
CROSSROADS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: A Guide to New Jersey's American Revolutionary War Sites	\$ 5.00	\$ 4.50
DREW UNIVERSITY by John T Cunningham & Regina Deverio	\$20.00	\$18.00
GOLDEN AGE OF DOG SHOWS, Morris & Essex Kennel Club	\$40.00	\$36.00
HIDDEN NEW JERSEY by Linda Barth -	Soft \$ 8.95	\$ 8.00
	Hard \$17.95	\$16.50
HISTORY OF INVENTING IN NEW JERSEY by Linda Barth	\$20.00	\$18.00
IMAGES OF AMERICA –	\$20.00	\$18.00
CHATHAM & CHATHAM TOWNSHIP by John T. Cunningham		
CRAFTSMAN FARM by Heather V. Stivison		
FLORHAM PARK by John T. Cunningham		
MADISON by John T. Cunningham		
MANSIONS OF MORRIS COUNTY by John Rae		
MORRISTOWN by Joan M. Williams		
SUMMIT by Patricia E. Meola		
LINCOLN'S WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY edited by Harold Holzer	\$39.95	\$36.00
MEMORIES ENTWINED WITH ROSES by Ruth Churchill	\$15.00	\$13.50
POSTCARD HISTORY SERIES: Morristown by Bonnie Lynn-Nadzeika	\$20.00	\$18.00
NEW JERSEY GOES TO WAR: Biographies of 150 New Jerseyans		
Caught Up in the Civil War edited by Joseph G. Bilby	\$20.00	\$18.00
ST. VINCENT MARTYR PARISH, 200 YEARS OF HISTORY by Michael P. Riccards	\$25.00	\$22.50
THE UNCERTAIN REVOLUTION by John T. Cunningham	\$27.00	\$24.00
THE CIVIL WAR JOURNAL OF PRIVATE HEYWWOOD EMMEL ed. Jim Malcolm	\$20.00	\$18.00
 <u>Maps:</u>		
MADISON PLATES 3, 4, 5: Approximate size 22" x 31"	\$125.00 @	\$112.50 @
 <u>Miscellaneous:</u>		
Christmas Ornament: Historic Sayre House or Luke Miller House	2 for \$15.00 \$10.00	\$9.00
Note Cards: Hartley Dodge Memorial (Pack of 4)	\$ 3.00	\$ 2.50
Photo Prints: Historic Madison, 7 different views	\$30.00@	\$27.00@
Postcards: Historic Madison	\$1.00 each or Set of 4 for \$ 3.75	\$ 2.50
Tote Bag: Rose City	\$10.00	\$ 9.00
 <i>Madison Historical Society DVD's</i>	 \$10.00 @	 \$9.00
* Black Church History	* Transportation	
* Italian History in Madison	* Vietnam Oral History Project (with booklet)	
* History of Roses	* The War Years, On the Home Front 1940-1955	
* Villa Lorraine		
 Madison Historical Society Shirts *(Short Sleeve) Large and Extra Large only	 \$26.00	 \$23.00

USED BOOKS: VARIOUS TITLES, ALSO FOR SALE AT DISCOUNTED PRICES.

The Madison Historical Society

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 148, Madison, 07940. Office located in the
Local History Center of the Madison Library

Office Phone: 973-377-0722 x8

Office Hours: Due to covid, appointments are required when the office is
open on Thursdays. Masks are recommended.

Contact: President Virginia Laughlin, 973-593-4875

Web: www.madisonjhistoricalsociety.org

Email: historicalsociety@rosenet.org