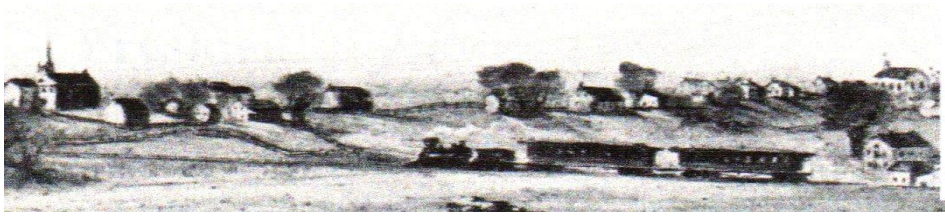


Madison Historical Society

Madison, N.J



September 2022

Newsletter

1st edition 2022-2023

100th Anniversary of the Madison Historical Society

**September 20, 7:00 pm
On Zoom**

Joel Farkas

“Remember the Ladies: Women During the American Revolution”



**October 18, 7:00 pm
On Zoom**

Erin Feith

“When Millionaires Came to Morris County”



If you are interested in participating in either or both of these presentations, 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

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Message From President Virginia Laughlin

September brings the true kick off to the Society's Centennial Celebration! Our 100th Anniversary has given us the opportunity to raise the profile of the Society in our community. As you walk through town in the next few months, you will see 26 banners on display highlighting some of Madison's significant people, places and events. And a big thank you goes to Coldwell Banker on Main Street for permitting us to place a centennial display in their sidewalk window. We hope that these, along with a feature article in Madison Living and a program given by Doug Simon through the Library lecture series will bring new recognition and appreciation of all that the Madison Historical Society has to offer.

I believe this increased community awareness is critical to the planning and success of the Madison Historical Museum which perhaps is our greatest undertaking since the Society's first project, in 1922, to save the Bottle Hill Tavern. Over the past year, we worked to better understand the interests and expectations of our community. We have now moved into the next phase of the project: the development and construction of our space in the Hartley Dodge Memorial. We still have a lot of work ahead of us and encourage anyone who is interested in or has experience with any of our undertakings to come forward to help out.

And finally, I would be remiss if I did not remind everyone about Bottle Hill Day on October 1st. As usual, we will be there with our interesting displays, items for sale and historical commentary that we love to share.

A Visit to the Luke Miller House



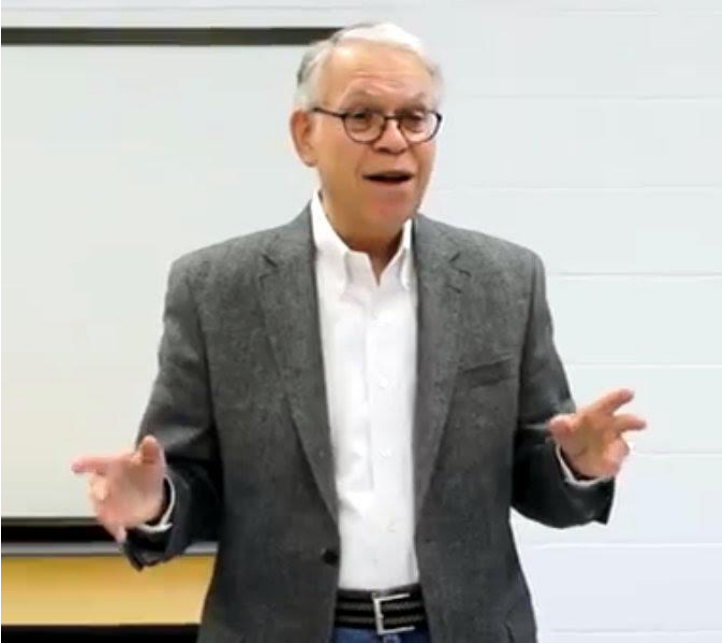
On May 27, 2022 Society member and former president, Susan Simon, hosted a group of Madison High School students on a tour of the Luke Miller House. The event was part of the high school's Service Day. Following the tour, the students helped to clean the house's grounds.

The Luke Miller House was built between 1730 and 1750 by Luke's grandfather, Andrew. There was a forge on the property that among other things serviced horses during the Revolution. It is said that General George Washington frequented the house during the time a contingent of his men were encamped on the southwest corner of what is now Geralda Farms during the winter of 1777.



About our Speakers

Joel Farkas



A well-known speaker about the Revolutionary War, Joel Farkas is a graduate of Ohio State University. He served in the United States Army, and is a volunteer docent for the National Park Service at Washington's Headquarters in Morristown. An avid teacher, he lectures at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Rutgers University, as well as the Florham Institute for Lifelong Learning at Fairleigh Dickinson University. A recipient of the National Park Service Centennial Volunteer Challenge Award, he is also an inveterate collector of original historical autographs.

Joel Farkas will be presenting one of his favorite lectures to the Madison Historical Society on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 7pm via Zoom. His lecture is titled, "Remember The Ladies: Women During The American Revolution." He notes that Abigail Adams, in a letter to her husband John dated March 31, 1776, exhorted him to "Remember the

Ladies." Joel discusses the role of women during the Revolutionary War, exceptionally brave women, our country's first ladies, Abigail Adams letters, and lessons learned, among other interesting topics.

Erin Feith

Erin Feith is the research assistant at the Morris County Historical Society, and presents her findings to the public. Additionally, she also responds to inquiries about historical matters using the extensive materials found in the Society's archives. She graduated from Drew University in Madison with a degree in History and double minors in English Literature and Humanities. While at Drew, Ms. Feith's knowledge of archival research with primary sources earned her a Specialized Honors in History award. She has valuable experience in the Digital Humanities, analyzing and visualizing historical questions through digital mapping and graphing software.

Have you ever wondered what the many Gilded Age mansions along Millionaire's Row looked like, who owned them, and whatever happened to them? Why did the millionaires come in the first place? Those are some of the intriguing question that Ms. Feith will address in her talk.



Society Makes Two Scholarship Awards This Year



Zoe Baumann receiving her award from society president Ginnie Laughlin.

Recent Madison High School graduates Zoe Baumann and Luke Wirth are the recipients of this year's History Scholarship Award sponsored by the Madison Historical Society. The award normally goes to one student, but this year's recipients were so outstanding the society decided to make two awards of \$1000 each for college expenses.

Baumann has many honors including as a member of the National Honor Society, World Language Honor Society (French), a recipient of a National French Honor Society Award, and the Presidential Award for Educational Excellence. She also competed for Madison High School in Track, a 4 year Varsity - Discus and Javelin thrower. She will be attending Boston University.

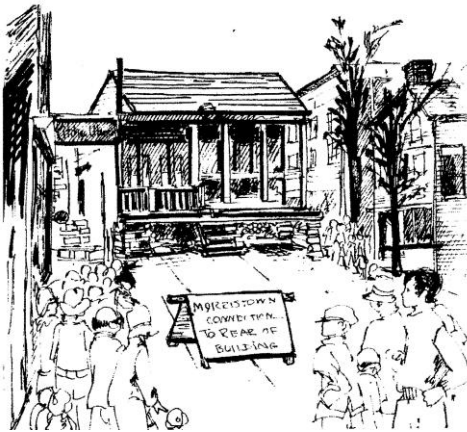


Luke Wirth and Ginnie Laughlin

Luke Wirth is heading for James Madison to study Political Science with eyes on a law degree. He was a member of the High school Ice Hockey team and in addition to the historical society award was a recipient of the Chatham Fire Department Scholarship and the Christopher Murphy Scholarship.

Good luck to both of these terrific young people headed off to college.

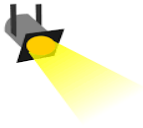
Library To Sponsor Talk on the History of Madison and the Madison Historical Society



Rendering of the move of the Bottle Hill

On September 27 at 7:00 pm, the Madison Public Library will sponsor a lecture by Doug Simon via Zoom on the history of the Madison Historical Society. The event is part of the many activities celebrating the 100th anniversary of the society's founding which had a very unique origin. One of the old landmarks in 1922 was the Bottle Hill Tavern, located on the corner of Waverly Place and Main Street. During his visit to the United States in 1825, Lafayette stopped for a reception at the tavern and from the porch reviewed the troops marching in his honor. In 1922 the First National Bank of Madison purchased the site of the Bottle Hill Tavern and the structure was doomed to demolition. Civic minded citizens mobilized for action to save the landmark and move it to on lower Main Street where the Bank of America now resides. Moving the tavern was a complex and delicate task. Madison's trolley car system was still operating on Main Street. But the Traction Company that operated the trolley cooperated in setting up a shuttle system, for during the moving process the building blocked off the tracks.

In January of 1923, the Bottle Hill Tavern settled on its new foundation and the effort led to the forming of the Madison Historical Society with fifty charter members and thirteen life members.



Spotlight on History

THE LAST PICTURE SHOW: THE HISTORY OF CINEMA IN MADISON

BY HERMAN HUBER

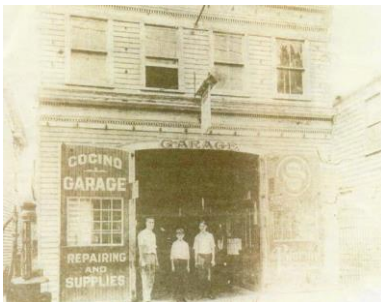
The last remaining "picture show" in Madison closed its aged doors in May 2017. Leased by Bow-Tie Cinemas, the Lyon's Madison Theater played four movies that day, one of them, perhaps ironically, was "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales."¹ What follows is a short story of the long history of cinema in Madison, which preceded that day.

Like the history of the automobile, no one person invented cinema. However, in 1893, Thomas Edison and William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, working in Orange, NJ, publicly demonstrated the first device to film and show moving pictures (20 second loops) - the Kinetoscope.² This was essentially a box with a camera and a peep hole for one person at a time to watch moving images.

However, it was the Parisian Lumiere brothers who are often acknowledged as the "inventors of cinema" in 1895; i.e., "the projection of moving photographic pictures on a screen for a paying audience."³ (It should be noted, though, that the Latham brothers may have accomplished this feat 7 months earlier in New York.) The Lumiere brothers, with their Cinematographe, a camera and projector in one compact box, hand-cranked (no electricity needed!), flung open the gates for the rapid evolution of movies.⁴

At the end of the 19th century, films lacked narrative stories, being largely vaudeville acts and demonstrations of real life activities. Though there was no synchronization of sound and picture, no color, audiences were nevertheless thrilled by the "'illusory power' of viewing sequences in motion."⁵ While the earliest narrative film was 1896's "The Fairy of the Cabbages," it was soon financially surpassed by Edison's "The May Irwin Kiss" of the same year. It featured the world's first cinematic kiss, and predictably during the Victorian era, ignited calls for censorship.⁶

Fast forward to 1910. By then, though still silent, films around the world were longer, soon to become one-or-more-reel films and ever more creative post-production work brought the likes of Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" to eager audiences. In Madison, July 2, 1910 brought the first of four motion/moving picture cinemas that would spring to life over the next 15 years. The soon-to-expire Royal Theatre on Central Avenue featured "High class moving pictures" for 10 cents and promised "Ladies and children receive special attention." Curiously, the advertisements in the Madison Eagle extolled "Songs illustrated with moving pictures," but no particular movies were noted. Clearly noted were vaudeville acts, comedians, monologues, singing, and dancing, "accompanied by moving pictures."⁷ Alas, by the fall of that year, the theatre ceased to advertise and the moving pictures stopped moving.⁸



Home of the Electric Theater. Later Cocino Garage and now Carpet 1.

However, March 1911 saw the return of moving pictures with the opening of the Madison Electric Theatre at 75 Main Street. The initial advertisement boasted "Four Reels of the Best in Moving Pictures and Illustrated Songs." Admission was still 10 cents. A year later, with a new owner and a shorter name

("The Electric Theatre"), it boasted a show featuring the "World's greatest handcuff expert, who broke the jails of Europe and America." As if any additional inducement was needed, the advertisement also noted, "Trolleys pass the theatre."

<p>The Madison Electric Theatre 75 MAIN STREET Domenick Maglio, Manager.</p> <p>Four Reels of the Best in Moving Pictures and Illustrated Songs. Pictures Changed Daily.</p> <p>For Saturday Only, Afternoon and Evening.</p> <p>Misses Redmond and Symth James Brittain</p> <p>Tom Foy</p> <p>Matinee at 3 P. M. Special attention given to ladies and children, admission 10 cents.</p> <p>Evening 7 P. M. . . 15c Children 10 cents.</p>	<p>ELECTRIC THEATRE MADISON, NEW JERSEY SAUNDERSON & LUBY Proprietors and Managers</p> <p>Grand Opening Thursday, March 11 At 7 P. M.</p> <p>New and novel, carefully selected Photo Plays showing Comedy Pictures that were constructed for laughing purposes only. Dramas with heart interest stories and features that are new and tell a story of some play or event that is well known.</p> <p>We want to please the public and that shall be our great endeavor.</p> <p>On the opening week we shall present</p> <p>Mme. Arville</p> <p>A Prima Donna that will have to be heard to be appreciated. - Miss Arville will sing at every performance.</p> <p>VAUDEVILLE at frequent intervals and GOOD Vaudeville that will be sure to please</p>
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Alas, the Electric Theatre eventually ran out of juice after 14 years, and became the Cocino Garage, where the torch was passed to another burgeoning technology.⁹

The Electric Theatre was not alone in the moving picture business during its tenure in Madison. The Savoy Theatre at 21 Central Avenue, with a planned capacity of 400 patrons, and across from the police station and firehouse, opened its doors Memorial Day 1912. In a slew of breathless alliteration, it advertised "Pleasing Photo-Plays by Popular Players Perfectly Projected." Balcony seats cost 10 cents. The famous "Prisoner of Zenda" played there in April 1913.

But a few ominous events perhaps foretold the future of the Savoy Theater. The first arose due to concerns about the infantile paralysis epidemic, leading the Board of Health to mandate temporarily shuttering the theatre in 1916.¹¹ Although it reopened, some patrons may have also become alarmed about safety after a small article in the Madison Eagle headlined, "Italians Are Fined For Making Trouble at Savoy." The headline, unacceptable by today's sensibilities, but perhaps reflective of then rising anti-immigrant movements, told of gun possession and drinking in the theatre.^{11a} Finally, with a hint of irony, the Savoy was showing a movie called, "The Liar," when the co-owner of the theatre was arrested for stealing many thousands of dollars worth of films, aided by the theatre's manager, in a nation-wide scheme.^{11b} The Savoy eventually closed; but Phoenix-like, it rose again several months later on June 12, 1920 with new owners and a new name - Liberty Theatre. But it was not to be; even a new name could not



The Liberty Theater

save it and the theater finally capitulated in November 1924. The front third of the building still stands at its original location, "facade largely intact."¹²

The first spoken words with synchronized dialogue in a feature film were in Warner Brothers' "The Jazz Singer" in October 1927.¹³ Just two years earlier, on October 16, 1925, the Lyon's New Madison Theatre at 14 Lincoln Place proudly opened its doors to an enthusiastic Madison, and would become, by far, the town's longest functioning and grandest theater. At 137 feet deep and a street front of 70 feet, it had room for commercial space in front, an estimated capacity of 1,000 movie patrons, a Morton Organ, and a single large screen. The ornate interior boasted marble, frescoes, white pillars, and a "semi-dome" ceiling. A photo of a similar Lyon's theatre in Washington, NJ shows a beautiful chandelier hanging from within the dome. The first feature film shown was "The Pony Express," undoubtedly a run-away success, despite ticket prices triple and quadruple those of prior theatres.¹⁴



As owners and proprietors changed over the years, the theater's name changed also, formally and informally; Lyon's Madison Theatre, Lyon's New Madison Theatre, the New Madison Theatre, Roth's Madison Theatre, Madison Theater, Madison Cinema 4, Clearview Madison Cinemas, and Madison Bow-Tie Cinema. At some point it became a "theater" (rather than a "theatre").¹⁵

By the time talkies came to town, the Lyon's Madison Theatre was ready with state of the art audio equipment installed in 1929. That year, the Lyon's Madison proudly heralded one of its early talkies in a dizzying display of hyperbole and melodrama: "*Madam X - A wife who had sinned, a husband who could not forgive, a downward path traveled by a penitent girl, outcast alone. And then one flaming moment of intense drama - such a scene as comes to the screen once in a generation.*"¹⁶

Equipment continued to be upgraded over the years, with Cinemascope arriving in 1954. But the view of the theater as Morris County's finest began to fade in the last quarter of the 20th century, with limited showing of first-run movies. By 1981, the large, single screen in the theater was divided into separate smaller screens, first as a triplex and then as a quad. The building began to look and feel tired and outdated. Needless to say, the beauty of the dome and chandelier and painted frescoes were things of the distant past.¹⁷

In 2013, Bow-Tie Cinemas became the final operator of the theater, after acquiring Clearview Cinemas from Cablevision; they even installed upgraded digital projectors and stadium seating.¹⁸ When the Garibaldi Group sold the theater to Saxum Real Estate for \$1.7 million in February 2017, after a year on the market, Bow-Tie Cinemas maintained a month-to-month lease on the space and continued to show movies. Many residents were therefore shocked when Bow-Tie Cinemas suddenly terminated its lease and moved out on May 30, 2017.¹⁹

Saxum Real Estate presented plans to the Planning Board to build a mixed-use, multi-story residential and commercial structure on the site of the Lyon's Madison Theater. Plans included a small movie theater, which eventually fell by the wayside. Some borough residents noted that the theater had dwindling patronage and had lost its importance. Others lamented the cultural and historic loss to the town, and formed a grassroots organization, "Save Madison Theater, Inc." Sandy Kolakowski, a founding member, along with former mayor Woody Kerkeslager, helped the organization collect more than 2,100 petition signatures in support, with the intent of creating a non-profit entity to purchase and manage a low-cost theater. However, Kolakowski noted the biggest impediment to their plans was the lack of a willing seller.²⁰ Bonnie Monte (Shakespeare Theater of NJ artistic director), summed it up by saying, "I don't think making life convenient for four stories of commuters, so they can hop on a train, is worth sacrificing the character of Madison, New Jersey."²¹ The new owner then went to the Historic Preservation Commission where discussion revolved around the costs and wisdom of making major structural repairs to the aged building. The Historic Preservation Commission also expressed concerns about the proposed replacement building's limited consistency with the architecture of the historic district. Ultimately, the Commission approved the demolition of the building, with conditions. The Board of Adjustment later granted approval for the construction of the proposed building, with a number of variances.

More than a full year has passed since the Madison Theater was demolished. Other area towns, such as Summit, Millburn, Chatham, Maplewood, and Montclair have also lost their theaters. Some are looking to reopen as indie, art house cinemas, with a different business model.²² Whether the borough will one day have another community cinema is, of course, unknown. Until then, there will be those who fondly remember the last picture show in Madison.

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