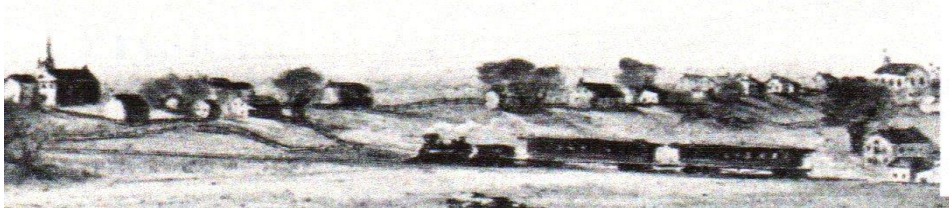


Madison Historical Society

Madison, N.J



*September 2023
Newsletter
1st edition 2023-2024*

The Madison Historical Society Presents

**September 19, 7:00 pm
On Zoom**

Anne Dimock

**“Madison’s Barbershop
Controversy: Local
History Through the Lens
of Historical Fiction and
Imagination”**



**October 24, 7:00 pm
On Zoom**

Rick Feingold

**“Cornelius Vanderbilt –
First Gilded Age Tycoon”**



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

As we enjoy the last few weeks of August's summer, the Society is turning its attention to our public activities of the fall: our usual fall lecture series in September and October and Bottle Hill Day, Madison's town celebration on October 7th. Due to the pending closure of the Library, our Fall lectures will continue to be virtual. But you will find us, in person, at our booth on Waverly Place on Bottle Hill Day. We hope you will stop by to chat about our future activities.

In preparation for the pending renovations to the Madison Public Library, the Society has temporarily relocated its office. Although the office will still be closed to the public except by appointment only, it will be staffed on Tuesdays, as usual. Our email address and phone number will remain the same and both will be monitored as usual. And the work of the Society will continue as usual!

Work continues on the planning and building of the Madison History Museum in the Hartley Dodge Memorial. We are also working on building and rolling out a new and improved website in the new year and we are moving along with our oral history program of interviewing long-time residents of Madison to record their memories for posterity. If you or someone you know would be a good candidate, please let us know through our website.

Please enjoy the remainder of the summer and join us for all our coming events this fall.

Library and Society Office Closing

The Madison Public Library is undergoing substantial renovation work for up to a year. As a result, the Madison Historical Society Office is now closed for several months and we will be working remote.. If you need to communicate with us for any reason, such as a research request, please contact us through email at historicalsociety@rosenet.org or U.S. Mail: P.O. Box 148, Madison, N.J. 07940.



About our Speakers

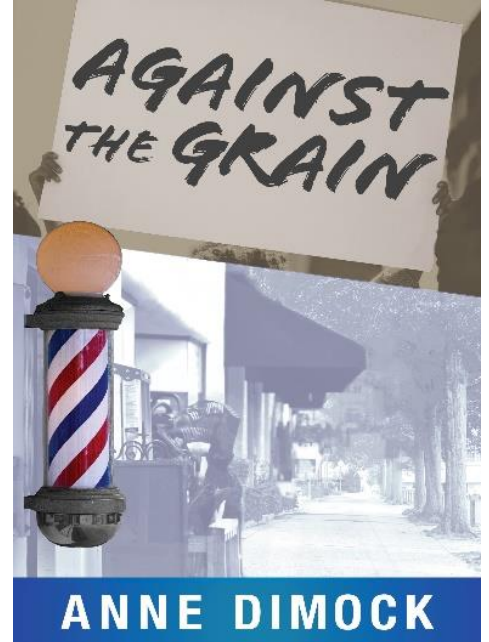
Anne Dimock



Anne is also the author of **Humble Pie: Musings on What Lies Beneath the Crust**. She is an eclectic writer of plays, short stories, and essays, and her work has appeared on stage, in print, and online. Anne has a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Wisconsin,

Milwaukee and resides in Croton-on-Hudson, New York. She and her husband were featured in a New York Times article titled, **Cuddling Once a Day. That is Their Rule**. Her website is <https://www.annedimock.com>.

The 1960s were turbulent times in America and Madison was not spared. The Barbershop controversy of 1964 was perhaps its most well known example. Want to know more about it? Anne Dimock's latest novel, **Against The Grain** (Woodhall Press, November 2022) portrays those times and troubles in a fictional NJ town, based on her own life in Madison. Join her as she presents the history and her process to the Madison Historical Society.



Rick Feingold



Rick Feingold teaches American Business History at Bergen Community College and holds an MBA from Penn State University. He lectures widely on a great range of topics.



Cornelius Vanderbilt

began operating his own ferry in New York Harbor at the age of 16. The tiny business would grow into a massive steamship company. Vanderbilt undercut his competitors by pricing his services so low he would drive them out of business. Eventually he built a railroad empire from New York to Chicago and the First Grand Central Station at 42nd Street. During the Gilded Age the Vanderbilts built massive mansions and hosted grand parties. Find out what happened to the fortune of America's first robber baron.



Spotlight on History

THE CURIOUS PRESENCE OF THE DOOR IN THE WOODS

by Herman Huber

Part 1 of 2 Parts

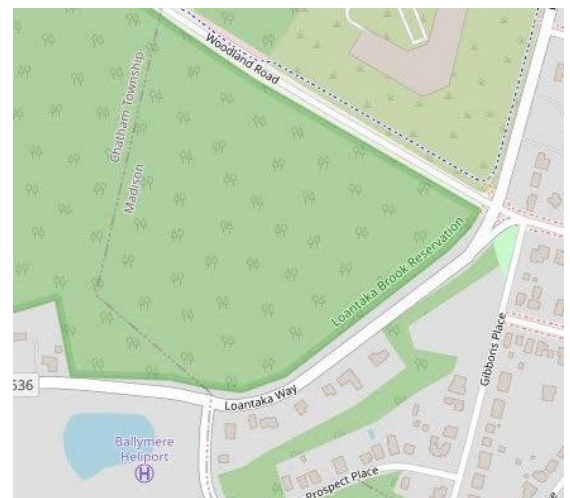
*"How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?"*¹ Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 1890



There is a large parcel of land at the S. W. corner of Loantaka Way and Woodland Road in Madison that has a mystery associated with it, as well as a rich history. A local resident, Cindy Lowden, wrote to the Madison Historical Society inquiring of an odd sighting, decades old, and asking why there is a door built into the hill on that property, only visible during winter. No one at the society had any idea.

With Holmesian principles at the ready, I embarked on a field trip with fellow board member Blair Conley to answer this question once and for all. Traipsing through thick, tick infested underbrush we arrived at the site, only to find the mystery more complicated than we imagined. First, there is no door per se, at least not now. Rather, it is an obvious

passageway or tunnel of some sort, the arched entrance to which is filled in by cement and embedded in a long stone wall or foundation. Second, further research found that the property itself has been owned and sold many times, with some of its residents being major icons of Madison. Third, a little-known fact is that a former US President was a guest there. Fourth, it is now part of the Morris County Park Commission, Loantaka Brook Reservation. Fifth and finally, it is about a mile from the 1777 encampment of the Continental Army.

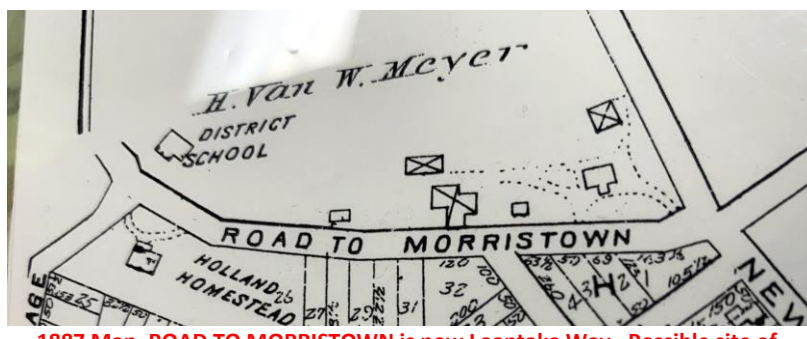


Edward Holland owned or leased that property of about 135 acres, as shown on an 1868 map.^{1a} (But Holland actually resided on property across the street on Loantaka Way, from 1859 until 1875.²) Nearby was a distillery and the old Loantaka school - Spring Valley school, administered by Chatham Township, dating from about 1852. Before its closure in 1910, it was a one-room schoolhouse, with one teacher for all children aged 5-18. Families paid \$4 per child per quarter.³ The building still exists.

Born in Ireland in about 1825, the 1880 census shows that Holland was classified as a farmer, and he and his wife Mary raised seven children.⁴ He owned a number of properties in Madison, mostly in the Orchard section. Mary died in 1889 after a fall and Edward died November 1900 at the age of 77.

A near catastrophe engulfed the Holland family in 1888 when their daughters were crossing the railroad tracks at Main St. and Green Village Rd. in their horse-drawn wagon. The horse caught his hoof in the rails and fell, severely injuring itself. A coal train was approaching a few minutes away, heading for disaster. The alert gate tender sprang into action, removing the children from the wagon, flagged the train about the impending crisis, and watched as the train screeched to a halt. Its cowcatcher just grazed the poor horse.⁵

The 1887 map of Madison in Chatham Township shows the Loantaka property now in the hands of H. Van W. Meyer, perhaps as a lessee. A number of structures are noted on the property including a couple of dwellings and stables/barns.⁶ By the time of the 1895 NJ State Census, and now living on the old Holland estate across Loantaka Way, Meyer's family consisted of his wife, 3 daughters and a son, and an Irish servant.



1887 Map. ROAD TO MORRISTOWN is now Loantaka Way. Possible site of Springside Farm

There are two notable aspects to H. Van W. Meyer's life in Madison. The first is that he owned the 150-acre well-regarded Springside Farm, perhaps on or near the Loantaka property. A journalist's visit in 1886 found a herd of 35 Holstein cattle, and a silo which stored his special blend of feed, which he boasted improved the taste of milk. He also had a prize bull, named Bobby Shafto, "the pride of his heart." Each cow produced an average of 14 lbs. of milk per day. But he did not sell the milk, only the cream.⁷

The second aspect of Meyer's life in Madison, is alas, more notorious. He was elected to the position of Madison Borough clerk in 1898, only to later confess to embezzling \$8,000, the equivalent of over \$277,000 today.^{8,9}



William F. Redmond home, 1890. His brother with trotters is on the right.

The next resident, William F. Redmond, was born in Trenton in 1848 and arrived in Madison in 1888. He rented the Loantaka property from at least 1890, then owned it by 1898.¹⁰ Heavily involved in local politics, Redmond was on the Borough Council for many years and mayor for one term beginning in 1908. He served as president of the Madison Trust Company and director of the First National Bank, as well as the chairman of the Morris County Republican Committee. The 1900 US Census shows him living there with his wife, sister-in-law, and 2 Irish servants. The 1910 map of Madison by A. H. Mueller shows a

single and a double barn/stable, a small dwelling, a large dwelling, and a number of paths on the property. A nationally famous breeder of trotting horses, “When he died in 1934 at age 86, he was considered to be the oldest active breeder in the United States.”¹¹

In December 1910, Redmond sold the 135-acre parcel to Franklyn Hallett Lovell, Jr., perhaps the most interesting of all the residents of that property. Lovell shortly thereafter sold 90-100 acres of his property to Marcellus Hartley Dodge in February 1912.¹² An article in the Madison Eagle the following month railed against the growing trend of absorbing farmland into ever expanding large estates, chiding Dodge in particular.¹³

Appreciation to the following people who provided help during the research phase of this article: Blair Conley, Howard Craig, Janet Foster, Ann Huber, Kate Malcolm, Keith Munkel, and various Face Book members.

Stay tuned for part 2, where the story becomes even more interesting and everthing will be illuminated, maybe.

1. Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. 1890, *The Sign of the Four*, Whitman Publishing Co, Racine, Wisconsin, (1922) edition, p. 59.

1a. F.W. Beers, Atlas of Morris County, New Jersey (New York: Beers, Ellis and Soule, 1868), p. 12

2. Historical marker at 245 Loantaka Way, Chatham, NJ.

3. List of owners provided by Keith Munkel.

4. 1880 US Census.

5. Madison Weekly Eagle, August 31, 1888.

6. Map of Madison in Chatham Township (plate #8), 1887.

7. “A Visit to “Springside.”” Madison Eagle, September 17, 1886.

8. Morris County Chronicle, August 28, 1906.

9. <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1905?amount=8000>.

10. See 1900 US Census. Also, photograph of house dated 1890 in William Redmond, II, *Growing Up in the Rose City*, Will Redmond Foundation, Friendship, Maine, 1987, p. 6.

11. Ibid. p. 12.

12. Madison Eagle, February 16, 1912.

13. *The Big Estate Problem*. Madison Eagle, March 29, 1912.

Society Scholarship Award Winner



The Madison Historical Society Scholarship worth one thousand dollars is awarded to the top Senior history student at Madison High School. The student is to be picked by the teachers in the history department and announced at the Senior Awards Ceremony. This year the scholarship was awarded to Henrick Hamilton. Henrick demonstrated an acute interest in history early in his high school career when he made a documentary about Ivan the Terrible, unprompted and on his own. He also has developed an acute interest in urban planning and development. He was a student in the Harvard Model Congress competitive club and takes a deep interest to the task of creating new and nation-altering legislation.

This Fall, Henrick is beginning his college career at New York University with a planned major in Political Science.

Society Outreach

Lantern Hill. On April 7, 2023 Doug and Susan Simon presented a lecture on the history of Madison to around 80 residents of Lantern Hill in New Providence.

Luke Miller House Tour. On May 24th, Susan Simon took students from Madison High School on a tour of the Luke Miller House on Ridgedale Ave. The tour was part of the high school's Service Day. Following the tour, the students helped in cleaning up the grounds around the house.



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Current Society Membership

The current membership of the Madison Historical Society stands at 99 memberships representing 140 people. If you know someone who you think might be interested in joining the society, have them contact the Society at the Madison Historical Society, PO Box 148, Madison, N.J., or through our web site,

www.madisonnjhistoricalsociety.org or by email at historicalsociety@rosenet.org



The Madison Historical Society

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 148, Madison, 07940.

Office Phone: 973-377-0722 x8

Office Hours: Due to renovation work at the library, the Historical Society office is closed for several months..

Contact: President Virginia Laughlin, 973-593-4875

Web: www.madisonnjhistoricalsociety.org

Email: historicalsociety@rosenet.org