

Memorial To USS Maine

The Pompton Lakes Memorial Park at the crossroads of the Hamburg Turnpike and Wanaque Avenue offers a bit of Americana.

Visitors can see the U.S.S. Maine Memorial monument which was dedicated on Labor Day, 1914. The memorial, built of native fieldstones and mounted with a battered entablature from the battleship "Maine", bears a tablet and marks the site of the "Little Yellow House at the Crossroads."

Besides the Maine monument, the area has a Civil War cannon. It was dedicated in 1916.

The Yellow Cottage, which stood in a grove of Lombardy poplars was the honeymoon home of Martin Ryerson and Louche Van Winkle in 1778. Ryerson was a direct descendant of the Martin Ryerson family, who was one of the first settlers in the Pompton-Bloomingdale area. The cottage was situated along the roadways that connected West Point, the Pompton and Ringwood iron mines, and Morristown and was as convenient a stop-over for travelers.

History records that the number of visitors was too much for the young marrieds, and they soon moved to the Ryerson estate near the ponds in Oakland.

Later the yellow cottage was used as a tavern and lodge for travelers. One newspaper account of the time referred to the Yellow House Tavern as being situated "on the great road from Boston to Philadelphia."

Bloomingdale: One Forge And Sawmill

Thomas Gordon in an article in "A Gazette of the State of New Jersey," published in 1834, described the town of Bloomingdale.

Gordon referred to Bloomingdale as "a village on the Pequannock Creek, Pompton Township, Bergen County, (Passaic County was then a part of Bergen) 20 miles northwest from Hackensack, upon the Paterson and Hamburg Turnpike Road, contains one forge, a sawmill, machine factory, bark mill, one tavern, two stores, and some eight or 10 dwellings; the country around it is mountainous and barren."

According to some historians, the reference to the mountains being barren can be attributed to the denuding of the forests for the charcoal needed as fuel in the iron furnace.



SCHUYLER COLFAX HOUSE on Hamburg Turnpike shows the red Holland brick facade of the original structure at right and the larger section finishing in 1695. It is the home of Dr. Jane Colfax, an eighth generation descendant of the builder.

Memories Abound in Colfax Home

A piece of history is still living in Wayne. A 279-year-old house is alive with the activities of a direct descendant of the builder and keeping watch from the past are the ancestors in the family burial grounds next door — and the family ghost.

Attics full of accurately-kept records attest to the authenticity of the Schuyler Colfax House at 2411 Hamburg Tpke., south of Pompton Falls. It is one of seven built in the country before 1700 still housing a member of the original family. That eighth generation member is Dr. Jane Colfax who, with husband Michael DeNike, has restored the old home to its original warmth and beauty.

The house is on the National Register and a record of every measurement preserved in the Congressional Library under the Historical American Building survey.

Finished in 1695

The old home, which was one of the first two in the area, was finished in 1695. It came to be a favorite meeting place for Gen. George Washington and his officers during his Revolutionary days at the Dey Mansion.

BUILT BY Arent Schuyler, the oldest part of the house was started in 1683. It is one and a half story and faced with red Holland brick. The back and sides are smooth native stone set in walls 18 inches thick. Most of the original 12 over 12 windows remain. It is said that Arent and his second wife lived in the first section while building the more pretentious two-story main building. The materials and appointments speak of quality for the builder was a New York business man seeking the quiet of the wilderness. What he found, however, was not so much the solitude of farming but the business of organizing and running two iron mines and forges at what is now Pompton Falls and Pines Lake and a copper mine in Belleville.

The road the house was built on was an old Indian path leading from the

seashore to the west. It traveled across the Passaic River in the vicinity of Little Falls and followed the foot of the hills (now High and Beech Mountains) to the Pompton area. As commerce and traffic grew, a tollhouse was installed. It still may be seen across the turnpike from the old homestead. An old milestone in front of the house gives the distance to Hoboken or Jersey City as 23 miles.

A feeder canal which supplied water to the Morris Canal still flows behind the house. The once quiet waters have been churned by modern motors to such an extent that the property has lost four feet of embankment from the waves.

Sign of Eagle

A road at the south side of the house and a bridge are used to cross the canal. It is said that Arent, who was a trader at heart, had a store on the other side. It is also said that at one of his establishments, he installed a cage with a live eagle as his sign. This humorously referred to the fact that the name Arent was taken from the Dutch word "arend" meaning eagle.

THE ENTERPRISING developer was born in 1662 at the Albany outpost where he learned to live with Indians. His mother taught, "Always treat the Indian as a brother, never deceive him in word or deed." The Indians regarded him with much respect — a fact which helped him in his negotiations with the Lenni-Lenape for a large tract of land.

The original north Jersey property was purchased in 1683 by Capt. Schuyler who had won his commission in the British Army for courage and bravery during the French and Indian Wars in Canada. On behalf of six associates, he purchased, for wampum and merchandise totaling 250 pounds, a portion of land lying between the Passaic River on the south, the Pompton River on the north and the valley between the foothills on the east and west. The parcel totaled 5,500 acres and was divided into three portions or patents which were subsequently subdivided during succeeding generations. Capt. Schuyler and Anthony Brockholst were the first settlers on what is now Hamburg Tpke.

At that time, 20 families lived in the Wayne-Pompton area. Everyone was invited to weddings and funerals as they were community affairs. Weddings went on for three days. The reception would last one day at the home of the bride, one day at the home of the bridegroom and the last day at the couple's new home. Church-going was important to the settlers and the Schuylers and later, the Colfaxes went to the Pompton Reformed Church, then on property in Riverview community.

THE FIRST settlers, the Schuylers and Brockholsts raised their own vegetables, a job for the women, while their men were doing heavy work. They also spun cloth and made candles and soap during the early years. The children played happily and in harmony with Indian children, a heritage of Arent's fair dealings in the land purchase.

The house passed to Arent's granddaughter, Hester, who was a very beautiful and spirited young woman. During Revolutionary War years, when Gen. Washington had his headquarters at the Dey Mansion on Totowa Road, the general and his officers would visit the Schuylers who were cousins of the Dey family. As the family recalls, Hester could have had her choice of 12 of Washington's best officers, and she picked William Colfax. Hester is said to have, in anger, called him "the worst of the lot."

With a reputation for gallantry and wounded three times in battle, William had been chosen as second in command of Washington's Life Guards. He was six feet tall, handsome and witty. After a whirlwind courtship of four months, he left on military missions. He gave Hester a hand-painted miniature of himself which is now a cherished family possession.

The young officer was thrilled to be asked to attend Gen. Washington at the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. A highlight he never tired of retelling. A favorite officer of the general's, he was given a prized set of pistols as a gift. He remained with Gen. Washington until the general retired, then returned to marry Hester in 1783.

changes with each telling. Either she had been teased by her husband or she couldn't have her way. But at any rate, history indicates that Hester Colfax was a strong-willed individual

NOW BREATHING life into the old homestead is Hester's great-great-granddaughter, Dr. Colfax moved into the house in the 1930s with her brother, now Dr. Richard Colfax Jr. and her parents. More recently, she and her husband have been renovating the interior and restoring the antiques.

Through the centuries, the Schuyler Colfax House had lost some of the grandeur given it by its affluent forebears. Random-width floors had dimmed and walls had grown dingy with age. But the house, with its pegged hand-hewn beams has remained sound. DeNike, who is a renowned artist and sculptor, has carefully hand-sanded and refinished the floors and a decorator has furnished authentic scenic wall covering.

The entrance hall now has frescoed sepia-toned walls with a white chair rail. An antique grandfather's clock touches the ceiling and a bust of Lt. William Colfax, taken from the miniature by the sculptor, reminds the visitor of the man who gave the house his name. Dr. Colfax will point to the angled boards

on the door which, of the Dutch exterior ones, discouraged bullets or arrows from coming through.

The story goes that the ghost of Hester still keeps watch over the house. On quiet nights she is heard rocking in her chair. Perhaps she's pleased to see the homestead come alive again. She should also be happy with granddaughter's plans to fashion tombstones for the unmarked graves in the family plot nearby.

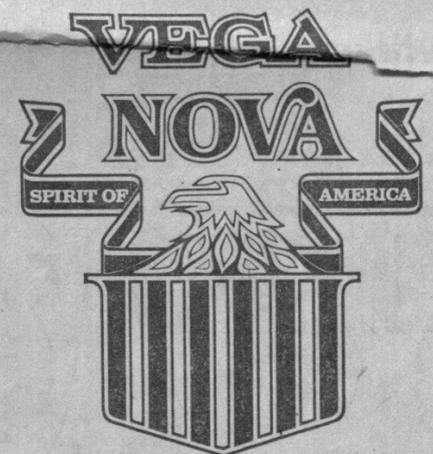
Buy Rite Pools Replaced Old Swimming Holes

The Wayne of yesteryear holds many childhood memories of the fun and games at the old swimming holes along the Hamburg Turnpike. As the turnpike has changed to meet the growing needs of suburbia, the old swimming places have been filled in.

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