

IN THIS ISSUE:

Annual HSM Scholarship (p. 2)
Signature Quilts: Who were these people? (p. 3)
Library News (p. 4)
The Marquis in M'town (p. 4, 5)
Help Wanted! and Membership News (p. 6)
Calendar of Events (p. 7)
Rancocas Creek helped produce fabric and thread (p. 7)

FROM THE FRONT PORCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF MOORESTOWN



View From the Porch

As summer comes to an end, the Historical Society of Moorestown is preparing for what I feel is the most exciting fall season that I can remember in all of the years I have spent as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Just for starters, in the next few weeks we are opening an exciting new exhibit. Under the leadership of Linda Vizi, "Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History," focuses on a number of the Historical Society's signature quilts — inscribed in the mid-1800s — and some incredible stories behind the signers. The exhibit paints a vivid picture of life during that period. In conjunction, Linda will discuss how she did her research and share some of her favorite quilt stories when the 2022-2023 season of our "New Jersey History Speaks Lecture Series" kicks off at the Moorestown Library on October 12th at 7:00 p.m. The event is also our Annual Fall Membership meeting, so please join us.

The following weekend marks the start of the Historical Society's annual "Ghost Tours" — the 19th year that this popular Moorestown tradition has been held. A committee has been at work to update the event logistics to better accommodate the overflow crowds that we experienced last year. We are working on new features to make the tours even more exciting. The dates for the Ghost Tours are October 14 & 15, 21 & 22, 28 & 29. Check our website www.moorestownhistory.org for more details.

The Historical Society is also working with a group headed up by Moorestown native and NYU Professor Richard Gray to capture and immortalize the history of the West End Community Center. The Center was created as a recreation and social center for the Black community in 1944. Since the Moorestown Community House at the time did not allow use by Black residents, several residents petitioned the township

for use of an old township building built in the 1920s, located at 425 N. Church St. The center provided a gathering place and filled an important need in the community for thousands of children and adults for 25 years. The group is looking to collect artifacts and conduct oral histories related to the history of the West End Community Center.

On November 10th, the second lecture of the series will take place at the Moorestown Library at 7:00 p.m. This November marks the 245th anniversary of the 1777 visit to Moorestown and the Smith-Cadbury Mansion by the Marquis de Lafayette. For a while it has been the cause of some speculation as to the actual date and circumstances of the visit, but recently, trustee Gary Ell has come across a series of letters written by Lafayette and others that clearly point to November 25, 1777. (See Gary's article about these letters on page 5 of this newsletter.) Accordingly, our speaker on November 10th will be author Bruce E. Mowday who will speak about his new book "Lafayette at Brandywine". Mowday argues that although the Battle of Brandywine was a defeat for the Americans, the silver lining on that day (September 11, 1777) was that by being severely wounded, Lafayette's status was elevated to that of a national hero, and in that sense was one of the war's turning points. Lafayette had not fully recovered from his wound when he passed through Moorestown in November of that year, which accounts for eyewitness accounts of him being in poor health.

Lastly, speaking of our lecture series, I would like to thank Diane Cairolì and everyone at the Moorestown Public Library for their continued support and partnership.

Lenny Wagner, President
(Lwagner559@comcast.net)



House Tours and Gift Shop Hours:

2nd & 4th Sunday 1-3 PM
Tuesdays 1-3 PM

Research Library Hours:

Tuesday 1-4 PM
Second Sunday of each Month 1-3 PM

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WE LOVE WHAT WE DO

HSM ANNUAL COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO GRADUATING Moorestown High School Senior Madeleine Ulman



This year's winner of the **Sara Franklin Homer Memorial Scholarship** is **Madeleine Ulman** of Moorestown. Madeleine will be attending Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, PA in the fall, where she will major in history and education.

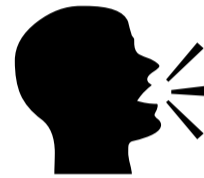
The scholarship is given annually by the Historical Society of Moorestown to a graduating senior at Moorestown High School, who has excelled in the study of history and plans to continue to study the subject in college. The scholarship is given in memory of long time Historical Society Trustee and Volunteer, Sara Franklin Homer.



Scholarship Winner Madeleine Ulman (photo: courtesy of the Ulman Family)



Percheron Park (located just steps away from Smith-Cadbury at the intersection of Main and High Streets) officially opens this October. It commemorates & celebrates Moorestown's agricultural heritage and features a statue of Edward Harris II's Percheron "Diligence".



NEW JERSEY HISTORY SPEAKS LECTURE SERIES

Upcoming Lectures on October 12th and November 10th
See our Calendar of Events on page 7

The New Jersey History Speaks Lecture Series, hosted by the Historical Society of Moorestown and the Moorestown Public Library continues in 2022/2023.

All lectures that are part of the New Jersey History Speaks series are free and open to the general public — either in person or virtually.

Check the HSM website (moorestownhistory.org) for updates.

If you plan to attend an event, please contact the Moorestown Public Library at (856) 234- 0333 to register.

The Historical Society of Moorestown

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Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History



Signatures on one of our inscribed quilts include (from top): Levi Ballinger, Kezia Gillingham, and Mary S. Lippincott (photos: Linda Vizi).



A member of Paul Canton's crew constructs a wall to hold one of the inscribed quilts that will be on display in the parlor at Smith-Cadbury (photo: HSM).

A window into the history of Moorestown can be opened through a sample of inscribed (signature) quilts from the mid-1800s. Traditionally, signature quilts contain the names of people — inscribed on quilt blocks — who attended or celebrated an event, like a marriage (see examples, at left). Through research we've discovered fascinating stories about some of the Moorestown residents who signed these quilts — they were courageous, inventive, daring. Their strength and perseverance helped to shape Burlington County and other parts of the very young United States of America.

When we examine a quilt made over 100 years ago we might focus on the design, the fabric, and the condition of the piece. And while these things are also essential to appreciating signature quilts, the real story is in the *signatures*. *Who* were these people? *Why* did they sign the quilt block? *What* did they contribute to their communities?

The stories being told in our new exhibit **Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History** at the Smith-Cadbury Mansion, paint a vivid picture of life in Moorestown during the mid-1850s: farms, businesses, homes, and families. They illustrate the hard work, determination, devotion, and foresight of our residents. Here are just a few of the stories:

- ☒ Several of the quilt signers left Moorestown in the 1850s and relocated to Alexandria, Virginia where they purchased part of Mt. Vernon from Eleanor "Nelly" Parke Custis, George and Martha Washington's youngest granddaughter. They took their innovative farming skills with them to show the landowners of the South that successful farming was possible without enslaved people.
- ☒ One signer established a boarding school for girls on Main Street in Moorestown, near Stanwick Avenue. Her writings have chronicled events from the hanging of John Brown to a local hanging in Mt. Holly, an 1861 ferry disaster on the Delaware River, a local earthquake, and huge chemical fire in Philadelphia.
- ☒ Another woman who signed the quilt voted in New Jersey before the right to vote was taken away from NJ women in 1807.
- ☒ And then there is the signer who traveled to Fort Mifflin (currently a National Historic Landmark located near the Philadelphia International Airport) in the 1840s and took a hot air balloon ride to Wilmington, Delaware.

A few simple strokes of a pen on fabric blocks that were carefully assembled and stitched together have opened a door giving us a fascinating glimpse of Moorestown in the mid-1800s.

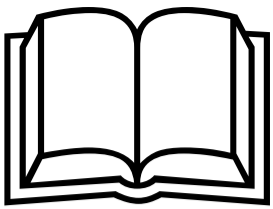
— Linda Vizi

NEW JERSEY HISTORY SPEAKS LECTURE SERIES

The 2022/2023 "New Jersey History Speaks Lecture Series" season kicks off at the Moorestown Library on Wednesday October 12th at 7:00 PM with Linda Vizi discussing how she researched the quilt signatures and what she found.

The event is also our Annual Fall Membership meeting.

Join us!



LIBRARY NEWS

The Historical Society Library staff continues its ongoing tasks of processing new acquisitions, collection database entry, and fielding and researching questions about Moorestown history from the general public and press. Without the help of our accomplished volunteers, none of these activities would be possible. Special thanks go out to HSM Trustees Liz Rosenthal, Nancy Chumney, Jill Weiss and Junior Trustee Peyton DeLorme, whose tireless work furthers our mission. Don't forget to check out our weekly Facebook and Instagram posts for interesting takes on a variety of subjects in Moorestown history.

As we prepare for a new exhibit coming up this fall, we came across this lovely photo in our collection that shows what it's all about.

— Stephanie Herz



Quaker Quilting Party circa 1900 (photo: HSM Collection)

NEW JERSEY HISTORY SPEAKS LECTURE SERIES

Bruce E. Mowday, award winning author and newspaper reporter, will be the speaker as part of our New Jersey History Speaks Lecture Series, on November 10th.



Chester County Pennsylvania Publisher and Writer Bruce E. Mowday (photo: <https://mowday.com/>)

This November marks the 245th Anniversary of the Marquis de Lafayette's visit to Moorestown and his stay at the Smith-Cadbury Mansion, now the headquarters of the Historical Society. Lafayette was forced to lay over one night at what was then the home of Richard Smith and his family in November of 1777 because he had not fully recovered from a serious wound he suffered in the Battle of Brandywine in September of that year (see the story on page 5).

Bruce E. Mowday will speak about his latest book, "Lafayette at Brandywine: The making of an American Hero". In his book Mowday explores Lafayette's role in the fight for America's independence, and how the fact that he was wounded at the Battle of Brandywine, turned a defeat into a turning point of the war and made Lafayette into an American hero. Bruce E. Mowday has written a number of books in different genres including crime, sports, business and history. He will sign copies of his book after his talk.

— Lenny Wagner

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Local businesses play an important role when they support the preservation of Moorestown's history. We welcome and thank our business members and we ask our members to patronize them!!

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Your generous support helps to sustain the Society's commitment to preserving Moorestown's heritage for generations to come.

Again, thank you!

New Business memberships are always welcome! We'll feature your company's name on our website and in our award winning quarterly newsletter. For details, visit us at <http://moorestownhistory.org/membership/become-a-business-partner/>

The Historical Society is a registered 501(c)(3)

LAFAYETTE GIVEN COMMAND IN MOORESTOWN

It's no secret that Moorestown has a rich history, and we know that it served as a "crash pad" for British and Hessian soldiers during the American Revolutionary War. It was also believed that a famous general in the Continental Army spent a night at the Smith-Cadbury Mansion. After a bit of research (actually a ton of research), we have determined the exact night in 1777 when *Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette*, known in the United States simply as *Lafayette*, "crashed" in Moorestown. [Note that One year later, the Hessians would ransack Moorestown and Smith-Cadbury!] Follow the time line . . . — Gary Ell

June 1777 Lafayette arrives in South Carolina from France and makes his way to Philadelphia where he joins General George Washington.

Mid-1777 **In mid-1777**, British General William Howe embarks on a plan to regain control of Britain's rebellious Thirteen Colonies by capturing Philadelphia, the city where the Continental Congress met. He successfully captures the city in September 1777, and then, after consolidating his command of the city by repulsing an attack from General George Washington's Continental Army at Germantown in October, seeks to gain control of the Delaware River as far north as the city, on which his army depended for supplies. **After a Hessian assault on Fort Mercer** (one of the principal defenses on the New Jersey side of the river), is repulsed in the *Battle of Red Bank*, Howe sends part of his army across the Delaware to Gloucester, New Jersey under the command of Lord Cornwallis to attempt to take Fort Mercer. Washington reacts to this by detaching forces under General Nathanael Greene across the Delaware just north of Gloucester. **Greene is accompanied by the Marquis de Lafayette**, a young French officer who had accompanied Washington at the *Battle of Brandywine* (September, 1777). Lafayette was wounded in the foot in that battle, and, while it is not fully healed, he is eager to join the action. Greene orders Lafayette out on a reconnaissance mission to determine the location and strength of Cornwallis' army. [SOURCE: Wikipedia]

November 25, 1777 General George Weedon and Lafayette are on their way to Haddonfield; they can't complete the trip that day, as they are too fatigued so they stay in Moorestown. Weedon writes to Greene: "*I have this moment recd your Orders to return, Myself & Horse is so much fatigued, that cant get further than Moors Town to night, Shall joine you Early in the Morning.*" [SOURCE: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0387>]

November 25, 1777 William Blodget, General Nathanael Greene's aide-de-camp, writes to General George Weedon. Greene informs Weedon that General John Glover's brigade will soon be within a few miles of Greene's troops. Greene has ordered that all troops should be in motion by eight in the morning and he mentions the Marquis de Lafayette. The letter is addressed to Weedon at *Moorstown* (Moorestown, New Jersey). It includes a note indicating that this letter should be allowed to pass to *Moorstown*, by order of General Greene.

To Brigad Genl Weedon at or near Moorstown Express:

"Dear General, I am Directed by General Greene to request you that, he has received intelligence of Gen Glover's Brigade who will be within a few miles of this place tonight as he has ordered the Troops to be in motions by eight Clock [strikeout] tomorrow morning, wishes you would be here with the Marquis, if not too much fatigued to night. Should the Marquis be fatigued the General think he had best join us in the morning."

I am with respect Yr Very Hble Servt. Wm Blodget, Aid Dcamp. General Weedon [SOURCE: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection>]

November 25-26, 1777 **While in Moorestown that evening, on orders from General Nathanael Greene, Lafayette is given command of Continental troops** to reconnoiter British General Cornwallis in New Jersey. The next morning the Battle of Gloucester occurs — a skirmish fought between November 25, 1777 and the early morning of November 26, 1777. It is the first battlefield command for the Marquis de Lafayette. **Lafayette leads 350 men toward the British position.** He carefully scouts the British camp, at times personally coming within firing range of British sentries. He then leads his men in a surprise attack on a forward picket of *jägers* [Hessian soldiers]. The 400 Hessians are caught completely unprepared, and began a disorganized fighting retreat toward the main British camp, with Lafayette and his men giving chase. Cornwallis sends grenadiers [generally an elite group of strong troops who often threw grenades] to provide covering fire as the Hessians retreat, and Lafayette withdraws under cover of darkness, returning to Greene. [SOURCE: Wikipedia]

November 26, 1777

Major General Nathanael Greene sends George Washington the following description of the skirmish:

"The Marquis with about 400 Militia & the rifle Corps, attacked the enemies Picquet last evening, kill'd about 20 & wounded many more & took about 20 prisoners—the Marquis is charmed with the spirited behaviour of the Militia & Rifle Corps—they drove the enemy above half a mile & kept this ground untill dark—the enemy's picquet consisted of about 300 & were reinforced during the skirmish—The Marquis is determined to be in the way of danger."

[SOURCE: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0409>] Note that Greene's original spelling and punctuation have been left unchanged. "Picquet" refers to a picket, a small group of soldiers placed in front of a main force, to warn against attack.

November 26, 1777

Excerpt from Major General Lafayette letter to General George Washington:

haddonfield [N.J.] the 26 november 1777 "Dear General, I went down to this place since the day before yesterday in order to be acquainted of all the roads and grounds arround the ennemy—I heard at my arrival that theyr Main body was between great and little timber creek since the same evening—Yesterday morning in reconnoitring about I have been told that they were very busy in crossing the delaware—I saw them myself in theyr boats and sent that intelligence to general greene as soon as possible as every other thing I heard of— but I want to acquaint your excellency of a little event of last evening which tho not very considerable in itself will certainly please you on account of the bravery and Alacrity a small party of ours showed in that occasion—After having spent the most part of the day to make myself vell acquainted with the certainty of theyr motions I came pretty late into the glocester road between the two creeks—I had ten light horse with mr lindsey, almost hundred an fifty riflemen under colonel buttler, and two piquets of the militia commanded by colonel hite, and ellis. ..."

[SOURCE and full text of letter here: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-12-02-0408>]

HELP WANTED:

Tired of cleaning your own house?

Come de-clutter ours!



Activities/Events: Help plan, organize and execute events.

Docent Training: Become a Museum and special exhibit guide.

Exhibits: Help create interesting displays of historical artifacts.

Fund Raising: Help plan and hold income-generating events.

Oral History: Conduct oral histories.

Photography: Attend events and take digital photos for our archives and publicity.

Speaker Series: Help select speakers, coordinates meetings.

Publicity/News/Web: Help get Society information to the members and public.

If you you'd like to help us (and have fun doing it!) contact us at 856-235-0353 Tuesdays 1-4, or at other times, leave a message. Email us (a better option) at moorestownhistory@comcast.net

Hope to see you soon!

MEMBERSHIP NEWS



Hello Members!

We look forward to seeing you at our *Fall General Meeting* which will feature a talk about our upcoming exhibit, **Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History** by one of our own, Trustee and quilter, Linda Vizi! Our opening event for the exhibit will be **Friday November 4th**. In addition, Linda is available for private tours of the exhibit — email or call HSM to schedule a date and time.

A warm welcome to our newest members:

• Ryan Kastner • Barbara Krupinska •

Are you a local business owner? Local businesses play an important financial role in supporting our ongoing work. We are pleased to offer ad placement in both our print and online newsletters. Check out our business membership page at moorestownhistory.org/membership/become-a-business-partner/ for details!

Looking forward to sharing history with you soon,

Jill Weiss, Membership Chair moorestownhistory@comcast.net



HSM at the Moorestown 4TH OF JULY Parade

HSM President Lenny Wagner, Vince DeLisi (owner of the *Towne Crier* to his appointed rounds!), Bill Archer (AKA, the *Towne Crier*), and HSM Trustee Gary Ell await the start of the parade (photo: HSM).



HELP WANTED:

Would you like to volunteer in a historic house museum surrounded by beautiful objects?

We need someone to manage the HSM Smith-Cadbury Gift Shop (and our Online Store!)

(See above for contact information)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2022/2023

BASIC MEMBERSHIP:

Student (\$10) Individual/Family (\$35)

DONOR LEVELS:

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2022

UPCOMING EXHIBIT: *Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History*

- 11 *Smith-Cadbury reopens*; tours, gift shop & library, 1-3
- 20 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 25 *Smith-Cadbury* tours & gift shop, 1-3
- 27 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4

As we put this issue of the newsletter together in late-summer we are still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. New variants continue to emerge and official mask and gathering recommendations continue to change. Please check our website for the most current status of any of our programs and events.

OCTOBER 2022

UPCOMING EXHIBIT: *Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History*

- 4 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 9 *Smith-Cadbury* tours, gift shop, & library, 1-3
- 11 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 12 **Annual Meeting & NJ History Speaks Lecture Series**, "Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History" 7:00 PM at the Moorestown Library
- 14 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, starting at *Smith-Cadbury*
- 15 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, starting at *Smith-Cadbury*
- 18 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 21 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, starting at *Smith-Cadbury*
- 22 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, starting at *Smith-Cadbury*
- 23 *Smith-Cadbury* tours & gift shop, 1-3
- 25 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 28 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, starting at *Smith-Cadbury*
- 29 **GHOST TOURS** 7:30 PM, starting at *Smith-Cadbury*

NOVEMBER 2022

EXHIBIT: *Inscribed Quilts: A Portal to Moorestown History*

- 1 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 4 "Inscribed Quilts" exhibit opens, Reception 5-8 at *Smith-Cadbury*
- 8 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 10 **NJ History Speaks Lecture Series**, "Lafayette at Brandywine" 7:00 PM at the Moorestown Library
- 13 *Smith-Cadbury* tours, gift shop, & library, 1-3
- 15 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 22 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4
- 27 *Smith-Cadbury* closed for holiday weekend. **Happy Thanksgiving!**
- 29 *Smith-Cadbury* library, gift shop & tours, 1-4

OUR RANCOCAS CREEK POWERED THE PRODUCTION OF

FABRIC & THREAD

Calico is a woven fabric made from unbleached cotton and often used in quilts like the ones in our quilt collection. During the 1800s colorful printed calico fabric grew in popularity as commercial printing techniques were developed.

Calico fabric (and cotton thread) were actually produced not far from Moorestown during the time our inscribed quilts were sewn.

In 1831, Jonathan L., and Samuel Shreve established a water-powered textile factory when they took over an existing mill on the North Branch of the Rancocas Creek; the village then became known as Shreveville (before 1676 the area was a Delaware Indian settlement known as "Alumhatta"; about 1780, Jacob Parker had built a dam across the creek and established a saw and grist mill there).¹ "The Shreves had gained experience in the textile industry

at the Trenton Calico Printing Manufactory, which was founded in 1820. ... By around 1845, the Shreves had invested about \$250,000 in the mills and village ... The factories employed more than 200 workers."²

In 1846, Samuel Semple "was brought over from Scotland and placed in charge of the Calico Factory. Mr. Semple was a weaver and understood the making of cotton thread and shortly afterwards the Shreve Brothers built a separate plant for the making of spool cotton. It is said that the first spool cotton in the United States was made in Shreveville."³

"Yet, despite the prudence and management skills of its owners, the Shreve's textile mills faltered in the years that followed, victims of a recession in the nation's textile industry in the 1850s."⁴ Eventually the Shreve brothers were

² *Smithville Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2014, p. 9.

³ DeCou, George, *The Historic Rancocas* (Moorestown N.J., The News Chronicle, 1949, p. 69). According to *The Roads of Home: Lanes and Legends of New Jersey* by Henry C. Beck, 1956, 1983, p. 132: "Samuel Semple was honored by his descendants as the maker of the first spool cotton in America. If the distinction is deserved, Smithville, still wobbling along as Shreveville, is where Semple did his first work."

⁴ *Smithville Historic District*, p. 9.

bankrupted and after the noted inventor and industrialist Hezekiah B. Smith bought the property in 1865 for \$23,000⁵ the name was changed to Smithville (it is currently **Historic Smithville Park**, part of the Burlington County Parks system, and located in what is now Easthampton Township, NJ; <https://www.smithvillemansion.org/>).

Meanwhile, Samuel Semple had accepted payment for salary owed to him by the Shreves, in the form of machinery that he had purchased abroad for their factory. "Using this [machinery] in Mount Holly, first on the site of Hack's canoe headquarters and, later, at Washington and King Streets, Semple & Sons began operation of the S.F.T. (soft finished thread) Mills, a close rival of the internationally famous Clark's O.N.T."⁶ (our new thread). "Semple made a very high grade of cotton thread and its S.F.T. (Soft Finished Thread) was awarded medals at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876 and also at the Boston and Paris exhibitions in 1878."⁷

— Lisa Knell

⁵ DeCou, 69.

⁶ Beck, Henry C., (*The Roads of Home: Lanes and Legends of New Jersey*, Rutgers University Press, 1956, 1983, p. 132)

⁷ DeCou, 83

¹ "Smithville Mansion Home of Hezekiah B. Smith, History", August 25, 2022, <https://www.smithvillemansion.org/history/>

**Historical Society of
Moorestown**

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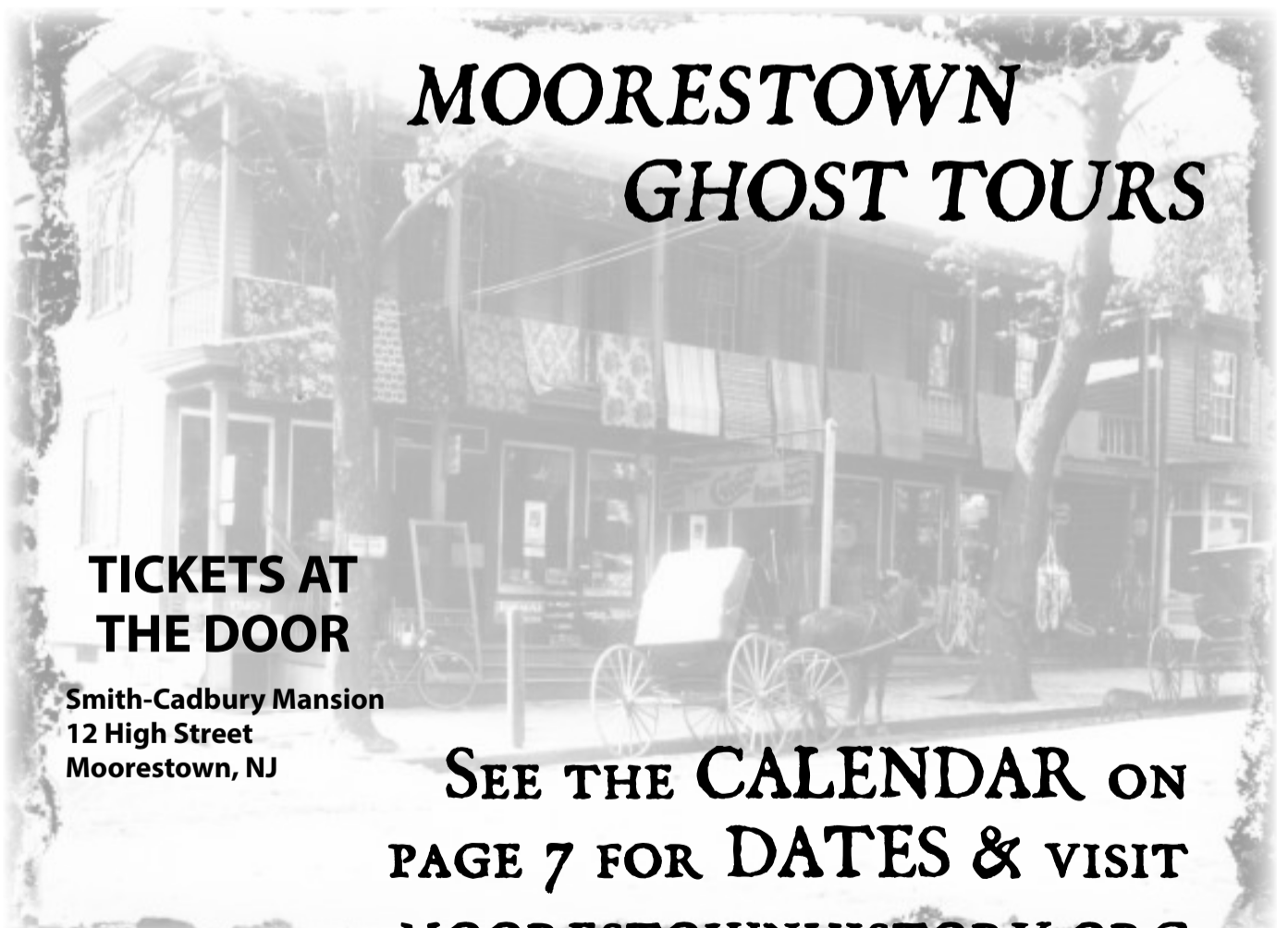
SEPTEMBER 2022

“The good
fortune of
America is
closely tied
to the good
fortune of all
humanity.”

—*Marquis de
Lafayette in a letter
written to his wife
Adrienne while on
his way to the United
States in 1777*

*[Source: "General
and Madame de
Lafayette, Partners
in Liberty's Cause in
the American and
French Revolutions"
by Jason Lane, 2003]*

*See pages 4 & 5
for more about
Lafayette.*



MOORESTOWN GHOST TOURS

**TICKETS AT
THE DOOR**

**Smith-Cadbury Mansion
12 High Street
Moorestown, NJ**

**SEE THE CALENDAR ON
PAGE 7 FOR DATES & VISIT
MOORESTOWNHISTORY.ORG
FOR THE LATEST NEWS**