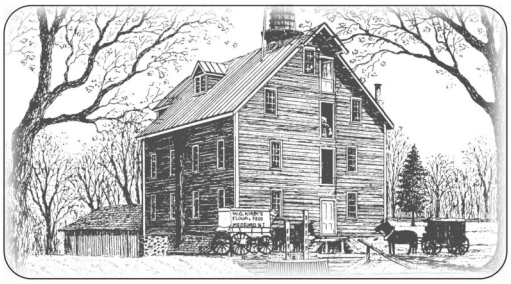
MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Newsletter

Kirby's Mill
275 Church Road
PO Box 362
Medford, NJ 08055

Cross Keys One-Room Schoolhouse
55 Mill Street
Medford, NJ 08055

Haines-Tomlinson House
51 Union Street
Medford, NJ 08055

Mill Phone: 609-654-7767 | **www.MedfordHistory.org** | **November 2026**

Medford Leas Rail Trail

By Dennis McDonald

Among the many trails on the campus of Medford Leas there are two that are connected to Medford's first railroad that opened in 1869. One hundred and fifty-seven years later, the Medford Leas Trails Committee maintains over four miles of trails that run through the campus including parts of the former railroad bed. Headed by Chair Gerald "Jerry" Claffie and seventeen volunteers, they patrol the trails, rake wood chips onto the pathway, and remove small branches from overhanging trees. They also report any trees that may have fallen onto the trails to the Medford Leas maintenance department and local arborists.

The first former railroad bed is the Blue Trail that can be reached at the intersection of Medford Leas Way and Estaugh Way. This .8-mile railroad trail follows track (long ago removed) of the former Mount Holly, Lumberton & Medford Railroad (MH, L&M). The railroad began operation on December 20, 1869 with Dr. Henry P. Eli of Medford as the President of the MH, L&M Railroad Company.

Another section of the MH, L&M's railroad bed can be found on a small section of the Red Trail. To reach that part of the trail one must approach it off Medford Leas Way near Bridlington Way. A walker can intersect the railroad bed near there. After about eight hundred yards the Red Trail departs from the railroad bed. but it is possible to continue through to Route 70.

Early on the railroad carried both passengers and freight to and from Mount Holly where connecting trains reached Camden, Burlington or Jersey shore points.



Standing on the Blue Trail, Medford Leas Trail Committee Chair Jerry Claffie explains the work the volunteers perform. (Photograph by Dennis McDonald

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TRUSTEES
EXPIRES 2026 Libby Zimbleman, Dan Gaehring, Andy Middleton, one vacancy
EXPIRES 2027 Edmund Gager,Leslie Jones, John Hines, Ambriel Gerber, Mike Yekenchik
EXPIRES 2028 Patricia Alvino, Carol Milich, Dennis McDonald two vacancies

TRUSTEE EMERITUS - Jeanne Woodford

{Continued from page 1}

Passengers travelling by train included businessmen, factory workers, and visitors to the Mount Holly Fair. Medford high school students traveled to Mount Holly High when Medford High School closed. Local baseball teams and fans travelled to games on the train, sometimes renting special trains for playoff games. The last passenger train ran on November 27, 1926.

Some of the freight carried on the train included marl, coal, cranberries, grain, animal feed, fertilizer, lumber, glassware, concrete, farm crops, milk and farm equipment including tractors. The railroad's customers in Medford included Kirby Brothers Feed Store, Joseph H. Haines & Son, Standard Oil, Kirby's Grist Mill, Zeolite Chemical Company, Star Glass Works, Medford Concrete Company, Peter Lumber Company and Christy's Lumber Company. Some unusual items carried on the train were the roof beams for Saint Mary of the Lakes Church and the power plant for the new Shawnee High School in 1969. The last freight delivery was to Kirby's Feed Store on March 20, 1976. On April 1 on that year Conrail abandoned the line after 106 years of service.

The trails on the Medford Leas Campus are open to the public. Walkers are welcome to stop by the office and pick up a trail map. More than 50 percent of the people who use the trails are nonresidents. As you move along the trails, appreciate the history below your feet.

*Some of this information comes from the book *Two Roads to Medford* by Christopher J. Young and William J. Coxey.



The Red Trail markers show the beginning of the Mount Holly, Lumberton & Medford railroad bed off Medford Leas Way. (Photograph by Dennis McDonald)



Medford Leas Trail Map shows the Blue Trail (center, left) and near the bottom, center is the Red Trail with part of the rail trail.



A flagman stops traffic on Route 70 so a north-bound train can make its way to Mount Holly during a special excursion trip sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Chapter, National Railway Historical Society on May 24, 1959. (Photograph by C.D.

This 1962 aerial photograph shows the tree-lined railroad tracks from top to bottom heading towards Mount Holly with Route 70, going left to right, at the bottom.
The Henisee Farm is located left of the railroad and the Mickle Farm is on the right.





This 1984 satellite photograph shows the railroad extending from top to bottom with Medford Leas at the right, center. The Railroad tracks formed the western border of the campus. Route 70 with the Medford Circle is pictured left to right in the lower part of the photograph.

President's Corner

October was a busy month for the Medford Historical Society with much community engagement and improvement to some of our historic facilities.

The month kicked off with the MHS's 47th Annual Apple Festival at the Kirby's Mill Complex. Over 120 vendors participated in our juried craft show while two food courts provided wide ranging culinary options for enjoyment for the many thousands of people who attended.

Volunteerism makes this festival possible, and we are grateful to the MHS members, families, and friends, the Boy Scouts of Troop 48 – Medford, and numerous National Honors Society students who pitched in to make this day fun and a success.

I want point out the efforts of some MHS members that went above and beyond to make this day possible with help during the festival and or behind the scenes: Bill and Mary Lou Pflug, John Hines, Rich Bucko, Tom Gerber, Mike Yekenchik , Leslie Jones, Carrol Milich, Carolyn Gallagher, Dan Sebekow , Andy Middleton, Dan Gaehring, Holly Doyle, Mike Panerella, Hope Pollemini, and Marc Rader.

However, the one person who masterminded all of the planning, preparation in the days and weeks ahead of time, and oversaw event operations was our MHS Secretary, Ambriel Gerber.

The numbers suggest that this was our most successful Apple Festival to date and it certainly was a lot of fun – thanks for knocking your first apple festival out of the park, Ambriel!

We're also proud to share that MHS showed up in the community marching in the Medford-Vincentown annual Halloween Parade.

Our next major community event is the Dickens Festival, where we'll have the Haines-Tomlinson open to the public for display and some light refreshments. You can read about exciting updates in the article *Progress at the Haines-Tomlinson House* in this issue.

Finally, with Thanksgiving around the corner, we'd like to give thanks to all of the MHS members, family members, and friends who have contributed time, ideas, knowledge, financial support, and materials to improving over the past year. Over the past year, MHS has achieved new successes in historic preservation work and community engagement thanks to you and the support of previous leaders, visionaries, and volunteers in the community.

Thank you for making MHS a continued success and staple in our community.

Progress at the Haines-Tomlinson House **By Michael Gallagher**

We're also proud to announce a number of recently completed tasks that bring the Haines-Tomlinson House closer to functioning as a museum and headquarters. Ambriel coordinated important internet upgrades at the Haines-Tomlinson House that develop our capacity for events, historic programming, and administrative activities there. In addition, Rich and Bill completed the creation and installation of a handsome sign in front of the Haines-Tomlinson House that many in the neighborhood have complemented us on. Tom Gerber has taken time to paint the 3 lower metal entrance rooves of the house and pending the performance of the specialized paint used, we're aiming to repaint the entire roof in 2027. Kathy Mathis Gerber has been quite busy performing curator activities and overseeing significant restoration work of the main room on the first floor, which we're excited to show at the Dickens Festival in December.



New sign at the Haines—Tomlinson House

Carrying on the Gager Mission

Upon entering the Cross Keys One-Room Schoolhouse in Medford, NJ, one can't help but notice two new crocheted banners adorning the walls. Created by Erin Sexauer, great, great, great, great granddaughter of Lester Gager, they are a tribute to the vision that Lester had some 169 years ago. His vision was to build a schoolhouse in which to educate his children and grandchildren.

In continuing Lester's mission, the Medford Historical Society and schoolhouse volunteers want to thank Erin and recognize her as part of the Gager history of the Cross Keys One-Room Schoolhouse. *Pat Alvino*



Banner in the Schoolhouse



Banner in the Wood Shed



The Medford Historical Society Welcomes Everyone Naughty or Nice!

SANTA AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE

Saturday, December 5th Noon-3:00PM

Stop by before the Dickens Festival

PICTURE THIS! Hot apple cider brewing, a warm potbellied stove, the schoolhouse adorned with 19th century holiday decorations and of course a visit with St. Nicholas. FREE admission.



Historic Cross Keys Schoolhouse

55 Mill Street, Medford, NJ

(next to entrance to Memorial Middle School)

Membership Application

Donations/Sponsor Levels to Preserve History

Of course if you have already paid, Thank you for your promptness.
Lifetime members may disregard this notice.

Name _____ Telephone _____

Email _____

Address

_____

_____

Please make checks payable to the
Medford Historical Society, PO Box 362, Medford, NJ 08055

Membership

_____ Individual/Family Membership - $40 per year
Members receive a Quarterly Newsletter

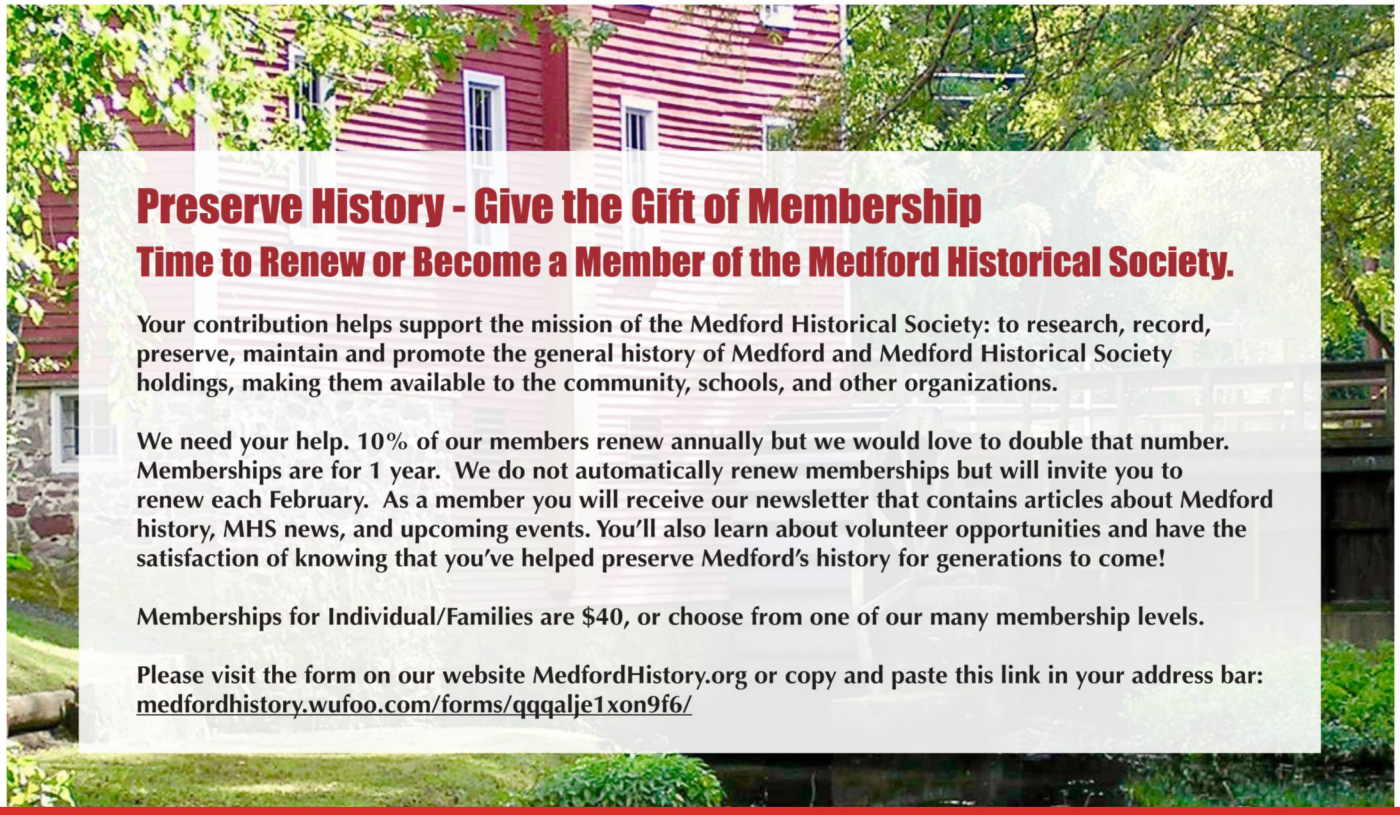
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History Partner - $100
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These donor levels will be acknowledged on our website
Donor levels will have the option of donating anonymously

The Medford Historical Society is a non-profit corporation in the State of New Jersey and is registered as a charity SIC #5006-04935. Our Federal Tax Exempt Number is 22-1911164. We are exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501 © (3) of the Internal Revenue Code dated 12/7/71. Donors may deduct contributions to the Medford Historical Society as provided in Section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers or gifts to the Medford Historical Society are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes under Sections 2055, 2106 and 2522 of the Code.



Preserve History - Give the Gift of Membership

Time to Renew or Become a Member of the Medford Historical Society.

Your contribution helps support the mission of the Medford Historical Society: to research, record, preserve, maintain and promote the general history of Medford and Medford Historical Society holdings, making them available to the community, schools, and other organizations.

We need your help. 10% of our members renew annually but we would love to double that number. Memberships are for 1 year. We do not automatically renew memberships but will invite you to renew each February. As a member you will receive our newsletter that contains articles about Medford history, MHS news, and upcoming events. You'll also learn about volunteer opportunities and have the satisfaction of knowing that you've helped preserve Medford's history for generations to come!

Memberships for Individual/Families are $40, or choose from one of our many membership levels.

Please visit the form on our website MedfordHistory.org or copy and paste this link in your address bar:
medfordhistory.wufoo.com/forms/qqqalje1xon9f6/