

# Gem of the Mountains

Fall 2015 • Edition 2

The Boonton Historical Society & Museum



## Hitching Post Donated to the Miller-Kingsland House

*By Jennifer Coultas*

Once a familiar sight around Boonton, hitching posts for horses became obsolete with the advent of the automobile. Now more generally found as decorative adornments in front of country inns, restaurants and period homes, hitching posts are much sought after by antique dealers and historians alike. One of several still proudly displayed beside Boonton homes has found a new home at the Miller-Kingsland House on Vreeland Avenue.

horse and carriages were to be used by his family. Thus our handsome hitching post was relegated to more humble surroundings on the back of the property.

Thanks to Susan Rose Anne Coppola Cooper and Lori Coppola Erd for making sure this hitching post and family treasure still resides in Boonton. We are certainly proud to be the new custodians of this fine example of life in a bygone era.

### The Boonton Historical Society & Museum

#### Board of Trustees

Andy Barlak  
Daniel Clark  
Jenny Darlington  
Tammie Holloway  
Veronica Jelic  
Gary Rintz  
Chris Stewart  
Loretta Wollering

#### Archivist

Monica Scozzafava

#### Membership

Eric Wallin

#### Graphic Design

James Kuhnert

#### Social Media

Candace Grant

#### Newsletter Editor

Jennifer M. Coultas

In 1956 when the Capstick family of Boonton sold some of their Greenacres lots, excavation for the house at 418 Church Street unearthed a hitching post in remarkable condition. Susan Coppola Silvia, who resided at 418 with her family, remembered that "... he just stood up out of the ground..." This wonderful artifact almost became a family member and moved with them to Lincoln Street in the flats and later to Stanhope, NJ. Susan, a Historical Society member and volunteer at our museum, passed away in May, 2015.

Descendants of the Capstick family believed that the hitching post had been forged at the Boonton Ironworks, but this has never been verified. Apparently, so the story goes, Mr. Capstick purchased one of the first Ford automobiles and announced that no more



*Photograph by Gary Rintz*

# Columbine's Story

Our new exhibit, Children of Yesteryear: More Than Just Fun & Games, features several antique dolls; one in particular, Columbine, has a story to tell. In a program presented to the Boonton Historical Society membership in 1984 the late local historian and then Boonton Historical Society trustee, Jean Ricker, related Columbine's story giving her perspective on the Civil War years and subsequent events:



"No one remains on the scene to tell the tale we have come to hear, but the one inanimate character, Lillie Vincent's doll. So she will take over and tell her story to honor her friends of long ago.

The related life of a doll, a little girl's puppet, a mere plaything, may seem inconsequential and even frivolous to those who do not realize that every one of us who has survived the loving embraces and reckless dandlings of a small owner does have a story to tell – some accounts more interesting than others, but all worth the bent ear of a willing listener.

I am 151 years old, and I show my age. The flowered chaplet around my head has faded – my complexion is dull – my cheeks are no longer in rosy, healthy symmetry – my beribboned lace frock and pantaloons are distressingly out of fashion. But oh, what a happy day it was when the

cover was removed from the box in which I lay captive for so long, and a surprised voice exclaimed concern over my plight. "I'm going to take you outside for a breath of air," my rescuer said. And that she did, setting me outside on the wall of the imposing brick building where Dr. Taylor used to practice and live. There I was in sunlight so bright, my eyes hurt. My photograph was taken with a tiny black box with flashing light, the likes of which I had never seen. Mr. Teusch and Mr. Wendt and the Messrs. Pettit and Dickerson, the Boonton photographers when I was young, had very different arrangements for making likenesses, although I must admit my knowledge of Mr. Eastman's invention is very modest.

"Come home with me," said the lady who had taken charge. "You are a little scrap of history, and we must do something about that! I, for one, want to learn your story." So, I was taken for my first frightening ride in a motor car – not a horse or carriage was in sight, and I was guest of honor at the first tea party I had been to since Lillie and I were twelve years old.

I belonged to Lillie – Lillie Elizabeth Vincent, that is – from Christmas 1864 until her death in 1947 – 83 happy and eventful years. She was just one year old when the kind and honorable John Hill escorted me to her home on Canal Street. (Oh, dear, I must remember to call it Myrtle Avenue and I do wish someone would explain to me whatever happened to the Morris Canal.)

Mr. Hill wrote a sympathetic note to Lillie's mother on that Christmas Day when I became part of the family. Lillie kept it near me always and even when I was banished to a dusty box on a shelf, it remained with me.

During the whole War between the Blue and Gray, John Hill was conspicuous for his devoted fidelity to the brave boys in blue, visiting

*"Mrs. Vincent –  
Among the last words Richard said  
to me when I saw him last was  
that I should get a Rubber Doll  
and give it to his little Girl, as  
a Present from her Father, 'not having  
found one that suited till late. I now  
send it to you fulfilling this his last  
request to me.*

*Respectfully yours,  
John Hill"*

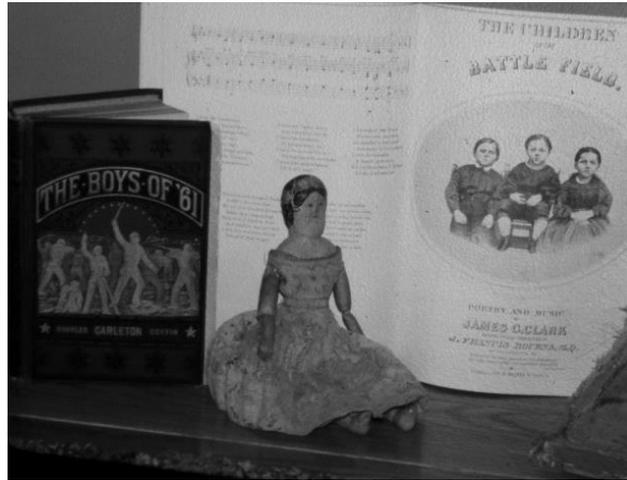
them in the field and ministering to their wants and comforts. How fortunate for me that he visited Richard!

I really was a beauty in my day – I say it without false pride or vanity. I caught Mr. Hill's fancy at once. Mrs. Hill, a gracious and beautiful lady, on finding I did not meet Richard's exact specifications – not being a doll of India rubber to cut teeth on – smiled, and made me a lovely holiday gown ever so slightly décolleté – I wear it still – and so I was introduced to little Lillie. We became close companions as she grew older and more careful. Poor little girl – she was, indeed, a child of the battlefield.

Her father, Richard Vincent, Jr., was born in England and became an iron roller in the Boonton Iron Works. He enlisted January 11, 1864, Co. K, First New Jersey Regiment, when he was 36 years old and was reported missing four months later after the Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia. He was taken prisoner and died at Andersonville Prison on July 2, 1864, five months before I joined the sad little family.

Much later, we learned about the terrors of Andersonville and the cruelties and sufferings endured by our Union soldiers there. Oh, how we wept when we heard about the merciless Brigadier General John H. Winder, superintendent of all Confederate prisons, and the appalling stockade and pens he built in Georgia mire and swamp. How I wished I could say a word of comfort, but I think Lillie and her mother somehow knew I shared their grief when these things were discussed. Charles Hopkins was also captured after the Battle of the Wilderness and sent to Andersonville – he returned to tell us about it.

In September 1865, Captain James Moore, Assistant Quartermaster of the G.A.R. left Washington for Georgia for the purpose of giving decent burials to the remains of our "murdered heroes." He located and marked 12,500 graves in the 50 acre National Cemetery located only 300



## I belonged to Lillie – Lillie Elizabeth Vincent, – from Christmas 1864 until her death in 1947 – 83 happy and eventful years.

a most modern outlook. Lillie took me with her everywhere – uptown, to Sunday school, to the 4th of July celebrations on the Witch Grounds, and more than once we visited or walked by Mr. Hill's house on the hill, a beautiful cottage surrounded by pleasant grounds, trees, shrubbery and flowers. The view was magnificent – a most diversified landscape – from his portico we could see Caldwell nine miles away – the Presbyterian Church was just next door.

Our Boonton postmaster for four years, John Hill became much interested in and was destined to accomplish much for the national postal department. He received much praise and thanks for this movement for cheap postage. He was properly named "the father of cheap postage in the United States" and was an influential member of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads.

By the 1870's my benefactor had become one of the great men of New Jersey; the outstanding Republican, he was frequently mentioned for the governorship. Lillie, my friend and protector, grew up to become an efficient young woman, a public stenographer and brisk young business woman, who taught typing and shorthand to an uncount-

*Continued on page 6*

# Memories of a Small Town Boy By Rick Wendt

With the recent start of renovation to the Boonton's Birch Streets steps and the many sets of stairs around our home town, my mind wandered back to my house on Lake Avenue. One of the first things I can remember of my childhood home in Boonton was the stairs. My house had stairs. There were stairs to get in, and there were more stairs after you got in.

I would follow Mom as she went about her day. Up the stairs she would go to clean those forever dirty 'kids rooms'. She seemed to just fly up those stairs! I would follow... one



mountain at a time, up up up just as I was reaching the top... down she would come carrying the laundry speaking as she went by..."I swear you kids must make dirt..." and ZOOM! Past me like a flash!

I would watch her hit the turn at the bottom of those stair's and be gone... ahhhh down I would start as I heard the door to the basement open and that sound of downward travel. More steps!

We kept the washer and dryer in that basement..."I think I live down here with all the time I spend..." She would often say. 2 maybe 3 loads a day. Sorting and folding into the dryer with some then... ahhh... up those stairs!

You would hear the back door open and that slapping noise the screen door makes as it is opened then slams shut. Again I would follow... back yard... MORE STEPS!

We had a clothes line in the back yard. It was tall and had three or four lines that she would hang the shirts and pants on. She would stand in one place and... pushing the cat away with her feet as she did it... The line would be spun around and with these wooden clothes pins that would be squeezed then clamped around the line and what ever she was hanging it would be set for the suns ray and natures winds to dry.

If you ever had clothes dried like this you remember the still bright memories of their smell... mmmm fresh air.

When my pillow cases were dried on the line I just loved them. It made me feel safe and warm to bury my face in those pillows' scented by God. On the other hand your blue jeans would stand on their own!! You would have to fight the fabric just to push your foot through just after the wash!

Well anyway steps going out of or into the house. Concrete steps front porch, back porch, screen porch. Shin stripping steps. I think I still carry scars from those steps! I think if you had that many unpadded steps now-a-days they might get you for child abuse, but I digress. I loved that house, I loved those stairs!

They sometimes were a mountain climbing adventure or a decent into a darkened cave. They were a dash down with a scream of joy or a slow climb of sorrow when you were in trouble. I fell down them, fell up them and miss them dearly. I longed to see them after I was gone. I loved to be on them as we sat and watched the world that was our street and waved and talked to those that passed.

But mostly those stairs, all those stairs, with their ups and downs, remind me of my home and my Mom. Mom as she went through her house each day and now through my memories. The first thing I can remember and the last thing I want to forget.

Remember your stairs Boonton. They carried your parents and grandparents on their way through life and carried us as we grew and dreamed of our ascent to tomorrow and our memories of yesterday in our Small Town Home.

---

# A Special Event At The Boonton Historical Society



History comes alive on Saturday, October 10, and Sunday, October 11, for a free, family-friendly event. A Civil War Living History will be held on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Sunday and 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the historic Miller-Kingsland House, 445 Vreeland Ave., in Boonton.

Twenty-three local historic sites are participating in a unique two-day museum tour event entitled The Pathways of History. Each historic venue will present lectures and demonstrations of historical and educational interest.

The 33rd Regiment, New Jersey Volunteers, a Civil War reenactment group, in collaboration with the Boonton Historical Society, will present a living history encampment. On Saturday morning the camp will open at 10:00 a.m. to welcome visitors throughout the day. In addition to civilian and military camp life, visitors will witness march and drill as well as musket firing demonstrations. A bugling presentation with original period instruments will be performed by 33rd musician Doug Grunn, who is also a member of Buglers Across America. An interesting and unique display of original Civil War artifacts from the Jones Collection will be exhibited including period weapons, letters, documents, ordnance, and soldiers' accoutrements.

# Columbine's Story

ed number of students. By October 1896, she had set up classes and private instruction for stenographers and stenographic students at the Kitchell Building on Main Street. I was proud of her!

Years later, well into the 20th century, she was teaching Pitman shorthand and typing in our home – I chuckled when pieces of plaster fell on heads and notebooks, startling her pupils, but no matter – the yard was full of flowers, especially columbine, whose seeds Lillie saved to share with kindred spirits. The lady-in-charge told me the columbine in this picture came from long ago seeds from Lillie's garden.

After the Civil War, John Hill's heart became as interested in the Morris County Sunday School Association. It was the children of the Sabbath Schools of Morris County, who, through their contributions, erected the monument to their friend John Hill, after his death in July 24, 1884, 131 years ago.

I remember that sad day and the loss of my dear friend. The entire town went in mourning garb, all stores closed, and all flags flew at half-staff. The newly organized Post of the G.A.R., the John Hill Post, was in line on the street to the church. The church itself was draped in black with flowers everywhere. After the funeral address, a procession formed and proceeded to the hill cemetery in Boonton, where flowers and evergreens covered the hillside – a beautiful idea, we thought, peculiarly appropriate for the final resting place of the man who loved flowers and all beautiful things in nature.

On Decoration Day 1885 the monument was unveiled in an impressive ceremony, a splendid work of art and a fitting memorial to the memory of a good, honest Christian gentleman who served his Church and State. I have never seen it, but Lillie was there. It reads: "Occupying prominent positions in Church and State, he, in both, served God. For he was a good man."

In 1928, through the efforts of Charles Hopkins, a bronze star was erected in Greenwood Cemetery to the memory of Richard Vincent. In that same year the town named its new school for its most famous citizen, John Hill. No one has ever erected a loving memorial to Lillie or her mother – her father's star stands alone, but I carry loving remembrance in my heart, sawdust though it may be.

The lady-in-charge  
told me the columbine  
in this picture came from  
long ago seeds from  
Lillie's garden.



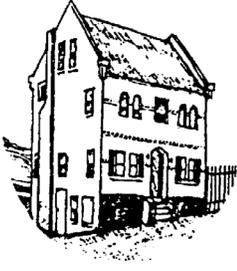
Now, the story has almost ended. I have been partied, and made much of. Old dolls are brought out to keep me company – Penny and old Kate – new ones have been introduced. But, the lady-in-charge, as I call her, has been unhappy. "Lillie must have named you," she said. "If only you could talk!" And one day she said, "You must have a name – and I'm going to call you Columbine after the flower Lillie loved so well."

Lillie and Columbine – a little girl and a doll both named for flowers – appropriate enough, I suppose, even though I secretly prefer my own true name – known only to me – that name a little girl gave me over one and a quarter centuries ago.

But, I gladly accept my new identity, and so finish my tale and sign myself."

## Columbine

Jean W. Ricker was an authority on local history. She served as Boonton Township's historian for many years, spearheading projects to protect township legacy sites, properties, and buildings. She was a former trustee of the Boonton Historical Society, past-president of the Historical Society of Boonton Township and trustee of the Rockaway Valley Cemetery Association in Boonton Township. In 1997 Mrs. Ricker was named a Morris County Living Treasure. She died on June 2, 2012 at the age of 93.



# Membership Application

Make checks payable to the Boonton Historical Society and mail to:

Boonton Historical Society and Museum, 210 Main Street, Boonton, NJ 07005  
Attention: Membership Chairperson

Annual Fees (Renewable in January):

Individual \$20.00

Family \$25.00

Lifetime \$200.00

Business/Professional \$30.00

Seniors/Students \$15.00

Lifetime Couple \$350.00

Add a Spouse \$150.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

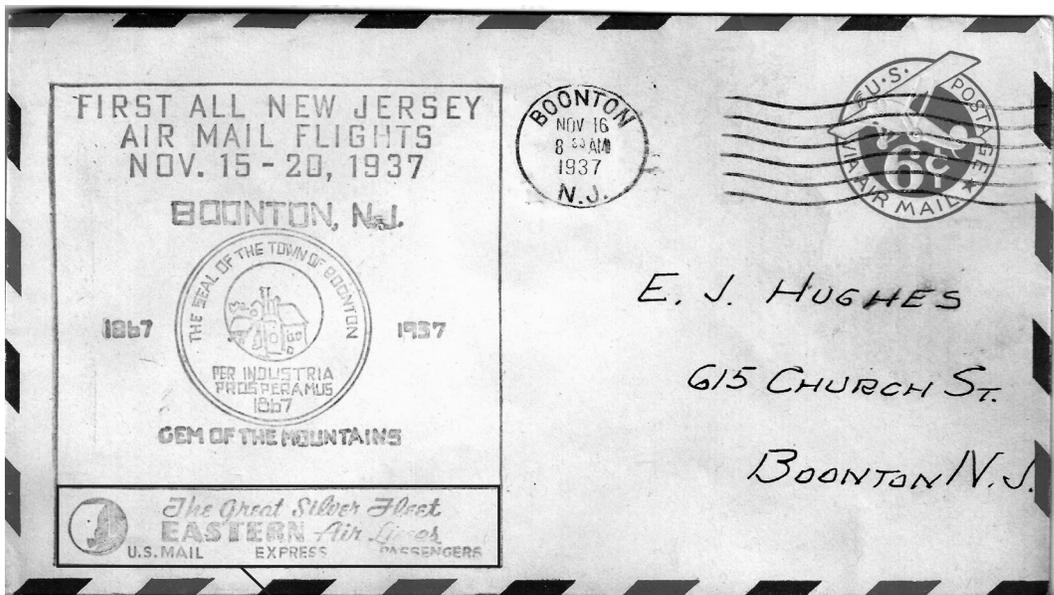
Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Boonton GEM of The Mountains Envelope 1937



Sent to us by E.J. Hughes

The Great Silver Fleet  
Eastern Air Lines  
US MAIL EXPRESS MESSENGERS



The Boonton Historical  
Society & Museum  
210 Main Street, Boonton, NJ 07005

# Boonton Historical Society & Museum

Andy Barlak ..... Museum Building  
 Jennifer Coultas ..... Editor, Gem of the Mountains  
 Daniel Clark ..... Exhibit Coordinator  
 Jenny Darlington ..... Recording Secretary  
 Candace Grant ..... Social Media  
 Tammie Holloway ..... Gift Shop Manager  
 James Kuhnert ..... Graphic Design  
 Gary Rintz ..... Special Events  
 Monica Scozzafava ..... Archivist  
 Veronica Jelic ..... Archivist  
 Chris Stewart ..... Special Events  
 Eric Wallin ..... Membership  
 Loretta Wollering ..... Treasurer



The Boonton  
Historical  
Society  
& Museum

210 Main Street, Boonton, New Jersey 07005  
 Phone: (973) 402-8840 • Web site: [www.boonton.org](http://www.boonton.org)  
 E-mail address: [Boontonhistory@boonton.org](mailto:Boontonhistory@boonton.org)

Open on Sundays from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.  
 and by appointment.



Find us on  
FACEBOOK Groups



Follow us at  
@BntnHistS

Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the society.