

Historical Society of Haddonfield

Greenfield Hall Virtual Tour Text

Updated 4/9/21

Introduction

We would like to welcome you to Greenfield Hall, which is the headquarters of the Historical Society of Haddonfield.

This house, Greenfield Hall, was built in 1841 by John Gill IV as a home for his future wife, Elizabeth French of Moorestown. The Gill family had been living here in Haddonfield for more than 200 years by the time this house was built. John Gill IV's great-great-grandfather was the first cousin of Elizabeth Haddon.

Elizabeth Haddon was 21 when she came here in 1701 from England. Her father, John Haddon, sent her to come and build a house on the land he bought here in West New Jersey, which was the last step required to claim the land. The year after she arrived, Elizabeth married John Estaugh, a Quaker minister.

In 1713, Elizabeth and John Estaugh built a large house that they called New Haddonfield, in honor of her father. A few years later, Elizabeth's father gave her land for a Quaker Meetinghouse nearby, and that helped grow our town. Haddonfield became an important community in the Philadelphia area.

Over the next 300 years, Haddonfield grew into the town you know today.

We are very lucky that the Historical Society has a large collection of museum objects that help tell the history of our town, and we're going to share a few of those objects with you today. We hope that you'll come visit Greenfield Hall in person sometime in the future and learn even more about our past.

Object Spotlight: Mickle House

Welcome to this Historical Society of Haddonfield Virtual Field Trip.

We are going to talk about this small building located next to our headquarters building at 343 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield.

Known today as the Samuel Mickle House, this building has also been called the Hip Roof House, the Sarah Hopkins House, and the Cook Mary Allen House. It is the oldest wood-frame structure still standing in Camden County, and it has been owned by the Historical Society since 1962.

It may be hard to believe, but this building has been moved not once but two times over the last 280 years.

Samuel Mickle built this structure after 1736 as a saddle-maker's shop, and it was originally located just west of today's Indian King Tavern Museum. We don't know much about the building in its earliest years, but we know that Elizabeth Haddon Estaugh bought it in 1752 to use as a rental property. When Elizabeth died 10 years later, she left it as part of a generous bequest to Sarah Hopkins, who was the widow of Elizabeth's nephew Ebenezer, whom she had raised as a son. Elizabeth wanted Sarah to have the income from the rental property during her lifetime and then it was to be sold and the money divided among her and Ebenezer's seven children.

The building was moved for the first time in 1836. Judge John Clement, who lived across the street at 264 Kings Highway East, bought the Mickle House and the two houses next to it and moved all three structures so he could build matching brick houses for his three daughters. Remember, it was a little easier to move structures before things like running water and electricity. Judge Clement moved the Mickle House to 23 Ellis Street, and the other two houses were moved elsewhere on Kings Highway.

For the next 129 years, the Mickle House stood on Ellis Street. The main floor was probably a single large room, with a small separate space to one side with unknown purpose, and two rooms above. Around 1840, a lean-to extension was added to the rear of the building.

Other changes were made to the house over the years, including to doors, windows, and fireplaces. By the mid-20th century, residents of the Mickle House enjoyed the usual modern amenities like electricity, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

The last private owner of the property was Anna Collings Vickers, who lived in Haddonfield but rented out the Mickle House for income, just like Elizabeth Estaugh and Sarah Hopkins before her. As a Collings from Collingswood, Anna was interested in local history and was good friends with members of the Historical Society who had told her about the house's long history. When she died in 1962, Anna's will gave the Historical Society the "right of first refusal" to purchase the property at a favorable price.

Just a few years before, the Historical Society had purchased Greenfield Hall as its headquarters, so money was tight, but board members decided it was important to purchase the Mickle House and eventually move it to the Greenfield Hall property.

On September 2, 1965, the house was moved with great fanfare from Ellis Street to the side-yard of Greenfield Hall where a new foundation had been prepared for the building. It was moved by a company called William E. Russell & Sons from Mullica Hill, which moved a number of structures in Haddonfield in this period.

Since then, the Historical Society has used the Mickle House as a museum space and later as the home of its archives and research library.

Thank you for taking this Virtual Field Trip with the Historical Society of Haddonfield. We hope you'll join us again, and we hope you'll visit our webpage or follow us on Facebook for more Haddonfield history.

Object Spotlight: Apron

Welcome to this Historical Society of Haddonfield Virtual Field Trip.

We are going to talk about one of the Historical Society's most treasured collection items: a piece of white damask linen that belonged to Elizabeth Haddon Estaugh, who is celebrated as the founder of Haddonfield.

Elizabeth Haddon arrived from London, England, in June of 1701 to "look after and occupy" the large property owned by her father, John Haddon. She was only 21 years old. Not long after she arrived, she married John Estaugh in 1702, and she had a long, remarkable life, surviving her husband by twenty years and living until the age of 82.

We believe she brought this piece of damask linen with her from England. The initials "EH" are embroidered in small stitching, down near a hem, as well as a small "99" to show the year -- 1699.

But what exactly was this piece of linen when those initials were added in 1699?
[repeat 1st image, of Dianne holding it up but not in front of the mannequin]

By the time it was given to the Historical Society 222 years later, descendants called it a woman's cape and said that it had been made from Elizabeth Haddon's table linen.

The table linen part makes sense. A pretty patterned linen like this damask would have been very expensive material in 1699.

But at that time, Elizabeth was still an unmarried woman living with her parents in England, and therefore did not likely need her own table linen. Another, simpler explanation seems just as or even more likely: Elizabeth's mother's initials were also "EH" -- she too was named Elizabeth Haddon. Perhaps this table linen belonged to Elizabeth the mother, and eventually came to the New World with Elizabeth the daughter?

We can't say for sure. What we DO know is that at some point it was transformed into something else entirely.

Though called a "cape" in 1921, our expert thinks it looks a lot like an apron. The material is joined in four sections, and it has button holes at each end of the gathered top. Descendants clearly interpreted that gathered top as a collar, but our expert thinks it looks like a waistband.

The damask itself is covered by stains, perhaps from its time as a table linen.

If it was remade as a cape, those stains would certainly have been visible to others. Quakers didn't like to waste anything, but we're not convinced that this was an outer garment.

As an apron, the stains would have fit right in. The buttonholes would have attached the apron to a woman's long skirt, and protecting the dress skirt. Before running water, women would have wiped their hands on their aprons to get clean. Women's dresses and therefore their aprons typically extended nearly to the floor, so this would have been an apron for a fairly short woman -- probably less than 5' 3".

Table linen, cape, or apron -- whatever it was, this damask linen is one of only a handful of museum objects in our collection that is linked to Elizabeth Haddon Estaugh.

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Object Spotlight: Ballot Box

Welcome to this Historical Society of Haddonfield Virtual Field trip.

Today we're going to talk about this small wooden ballot box, believed to have been used in Haddonfield before the year 1840.

At the time, Haddonfield was a small village, one of several villages that were part of Newton Township. The township extended across what is today Collingswood, Haddon Township, Haddon Heights, and beyond, and its Town Hall was located in Haddonfield on what is today Haddon Avenue, roughly where Haddon Fire Company No. 1 is based.

The ballot box is 8 inches high, 12 inches wide, and 12 inches long. The top has a hinge halfway back that you can easily imagine voters lifting up to put their ballots inside.

But we haven't found any documentation of exactly how THIS box was used for voting. We do know that before the mid 1840s, New Jersey elections might last over two days or even longer, in part because transportation was much slower and it took longer for voters to travel to polling places.

And we know that this box was owned by a Haddonfield resident named Samuel Nicholson, who was born in 1793 and died in 1885. Samuel was a wealthy farmer, and he was certainly involved in civic activities. He served as a Commissioner of Deeds, and served for a year as the librarian for the Haddonfield Library Company. His daughters Sarah and Rebecca Nicholson gave the box and other family artifacts to the Historical Society in 1921.

It's also interesting to think about who might have used this ballot box.

New Jersey's first constitution in 1776 allowed "all inhabitants of this colony, of full age" who were worth a certain amount of money and who had resided within the county for 12 months to vote.

The Legislature changed the rules in 1790 to say "he or she" instead of "all inhabitants," so we know that they meant to include women too. But only single women could vote, because married women couldn't own property at that time -- it belonged to their husbands.

A few years later, in 1797, the state clarified that voters had to be free inhabitants. And in 1807, the Legislature restricted voting to only tax-paying, white, male citizens.

So if this ballot box was in use before 1840, it was most likely used by only tax-paying, white, male citizens in Haddonfield.

Black men would not be able to vote until 1870, when the 15th amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed the right. Women wouldn't gain the vote until 1920, with passage of the 19th amendment. In both cases, many other barriers prevented or discouraged people of color from voting until Congress passed the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965.

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Object Spotlight: Bonecrusher Bicycle

This is a very early bicycle in our collection. It's known as the "bonecrusher" and it's the first type of [bicycle](#) with [pedals](#), though if you take a good look, you'll see that the pedals turn only the front wheel. There's no chain going to the rear wheel, so these things were very difficult and not efficient to ride.

The "bonecrusher" bicycle was invented in France in the 1860s, and it had wooden wheels with [iron](#) tires and a frame of [wrought iron](#). As the name implied, it rattled your bones and was extremely uncomfortable to ride, made worse by the conditions of 19th century roads. Unlike today's smooth asphalt, Haddonfield roads in the late 1800s were dirt - full of mud and potholes. Later, cobblestones replaced some of the dirt roads, but these were perhaps worse. Can you imagine riding this bicycle down a cobblestone street?

The bonecrusher quickly fell out of favor and was replaced with a bicycle known as the penny farthing, with its large front wheel. Few original boneshakers exist today, most having been melted for [scrap metal](#) during World War I. We are lucky to have this original bonecrusher in our collection!

Object Spotlight: Fire Buckets

Haddonfield has the second-oldest volunteer fire company in the whole country. A group of 26 Haddonfield men got together in 1764 and agreed that they would help each other if a fire broke out on a neighbor's property. About fifty years later, the fire company allowed women to become members too. Today, the fire company is known as Haddon Fire Company No. 1.

So how did you help fight fires before the invention of things like fire trucks and fire extinguishers? You used buckets of water!

To be a member of the fire company, you had to have two fire buckets like these. If a fire broke out somewhere nearby, you were expected to grab your buckets and help form a line from the fire to the closest pond, creek, or other waterway. You'd pass buckets full of water from person to person until the water could be thrown on the fire. This kind of teamwork to put out fires came to be known as a "bucket brigade."

The fire buckets in our collection are made of leather, and the owner's name is painted on the outside so you could tell whose is whose.

Object Spotlight: Hearth and Stove

A cast-iron stove like this was once considered to be cutting-edge technology for your kitchen. The earliest European settlers in the Haddonfield area, including Elizabeth Haddon, cooked on a hearth. The hearth is the area inside and in front of the fireplace, with all the bricks.

The good thing about open hearth cooking is that if you need another "burner," you just take a pile of hot coals from the fire in the fireplace, put it on an empty spot on the hearth, and put your pot on top of it! Some things could also be cooked in a pot hung from a swinging crane. The bad thing about an open hearth is that it's very dangerous if you're wearing a long dress. Many women were hurt or even died because their clothes caught fire while they were cooking.

This old-looking kitchen in Greenfield Hall was never really used as a kitchen. We think it exists because John Gill IV was building an exact copy of the much older French Family house in Moorestown so that Elizabeth French would marry John Gill IV and move into this new house.

Instead, Greenfield Hall had a "modern" 1841 kitchen that was in a room that no longer exists. It probably had a cast-iron stove like this one that's now in the basement of Greenfield Hall.

This kind of stove was a wonderful improvement over open hearth cooking. It used coal instead of wood for fuel, and it had both a flat top for cooking and an oven for baking.

It would have been very hot in the kitchen when this stove was being used, because the whole stove would have gotten hot, but it was much easier to move pots around for cooking.

Object Spotlight: Potty Chair

Back in the 1800's, Greenfield Hall did not have electricity or running water. The question always comes up - where did people go to the bathroom?

Most early houses had a building called an "out-house" or "necessary" that was built somewhere behind the house – but not TOO close. Like the latrines that can still be found at some campgrounds and sleep-away camps, the outhouse was basically a shed that had a seat that opened over a deep pit. This picture shows a seat from an outhouse that had three different options: big, medium, and small!

But going outside to an outhouse didn't always work. What would you do in the middle of the night; or if it was very cold, dark or stormy out; or if there was an old or sick person in the household? You might want something like the "potty chair" that you see here.

The chair has a hole in the middle of the seat that is covered when not in use. Under the hole there is a wooden box that holds a ceramic bowl. During the night, or if you couldn't go to the outhouse, you could walk over and use the potty chair and then put the cover back over the hole.

If you lived in a house with servants, they would empty the "chamber pot" each morning. If there were no servants in the house, it was generally the job of the youngest girl to empty the chamber pots. If there were no young girl in the family, it was the job of the youngest boy to empty the chamber pots.

Would that ever have been your job? I bet everyone was happy when indoor plumbing came to Greenfield Hall!

Object Spotlight: Samplers

School and learning was pretty different in the 1700s and 1800s, and girls and boys had very different roles.

Girls were expected to learn how to run a household. They needed to know about measuring and math for cooking and sewing. And they needed to learn different types of sewing stitches so they could make clothing, curtains, blankets, and anything else the family needed. Girls learned those stitches by making a "sampler," like the one shown here. This is one of the oldest samplers at Greenfield Hall and it was made in NJ around 1700.

Samplers were also used to teach girls their letters and numbers.

What do you think happened with the sampler that has the ABC's at the bottom? Do you think that the girl who made it started it on her own, without any help – she decided she could do it “all by herself”? She stuck with it and finished what is a unique and interesting sampler.

Some samplers tell about the family of the maker like Letitia Matlack's sampler. She gives the names of her parents and when they were born, as well as the names of her sisters and brother. Letitia also uses a great variety of stitches in her sampler to show how much she has learned about sewing.

In the 1800s, when girls were allowed to go to schools, the schools tended to have a specific design for their samplers that all of the girls had to make. The teachers wanted to show that they had taught the girls how to sew, but did not let the girls be very creative!