

**NJS Presents****Research Notes**

**DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v4i1.111>

*In this issue, we bring you for the first time “Research Notes,” inaugurated to allow scholars to share their works in progress and solicit feedback from others in the NJ History community. Thanks to editorial board member Matthew Tomaso for his help with this new endeavor.*

**John Fabiano, Executive Director of the Monmouth County Historical Commission,** is currently researching the possibility that the woman known as Molly Pitcher may have been an Allentown, NJ servant girl, who aided George Washington during the Monmouth campaign. She was identified as Mary Hanna in Presbyterian Rev. George Swain’s “Historical Discourse,” whose publication was encouraged to celebrate the Country’s Centennial in 1876. “Moreover from among us it is said was the famous Molly Pitcher; she who at the battle of Monmouth acted the role of cannoneer in the place of her husband...she is reputed to have been the daughter of one Jno. Hanna, of Allentown...and had been for a time a servant in the family of the father of Captain James Bruere.” Genealogical research revealed a close relationship between the Bruere, Price, and Hunt families. Prior to the Monmouth battle, Allentown was occupied by British and Hessian soldiers, while Washington was conducting a Council of War in the Hopewell house occupied by John Price Hunt. Expense records from this campaign include a \$1 payment “to a serv’t girl at Mrs. Watkins’s by the Gen’ls Order,” which suggests that Washington intended to reward an individual rather than the common custom of paying the householder. The identity of Mrs. Watkins led to the thesis that perhaps this dollar was not for personal services rendered, but for intelligence work. Shortly after the June 28<sup>th</sup> battle, Washington and his senior staff visited Mrs. Watkins at her Bergen County

house in Ho-ho-kus. The following morning he received an invitation from Mrs. Watkins' niece, Theodosia Prevost, to use her "more commodious" house, known as the Hermitage. Mrs. Theodosia Prevost's husband, Jacques, was a Colonel in the British army, yet she seemed to operate as an intelligence-gathering agent for Washington. This is evidenced by the trip she took shortly thereafter into British-occupied Manhattan under a "flag," escorted by her future husband Colonel Aaron Burr, who was tasked with that objective. Mrs. Lydia Watkins married wealthy Carribean merchant, John Watkins, who owned extensive property in Manhattan. She was the youngest of the "six beautiful sisters" of Richard Stillwell and Mercy Sands, who lived in Shrewsbury's "Allen House" now owned by the Monmouth County Historical Association. All of Lydia's sisters married British officers of the highest rank, who served in the French and Indian War. Since these gentlemen continued their service into the Revolutionary War, they found it prudent to escape the restrictions of occupied Manhattan. During this period Mrs. Theodosia Bartow Prevost Burr and her relations appear to have provided an invaluable service to the patriot cause, along with a servant girl from Allentown, NJ. For more information, you can access a recent presentation by Mr. Fabiano on this topic [here](#). Interested parties can contact him at [John.Fabiano@co.monmouth.nj.us](mailto:John.Fabiano@co.monmouth.nj.us).

**Dr. Geoffrey Fouad, Assistant Professor of Geography and Director of the GIS Program at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ** is teaching Monmouth University students to map the bottom of coastal lakes. Monmouth County has one of the oldest developed shorelines in New Jersey. The development process included impounding tidal waterways to form coastal lakes. This has been problematic in recent years as these coastal lakes have been the center of flooding due to major storms, such as Hurricane Sandy. To reduce flooding, the lakes should be dredged. Bathymetric maps of lake bottom should be used to decide where and when to dredge. Professional

surveys using sonars are expensive, and may not be necessary if the bottoms of the lakes are relatively flat. A cheaper and educational alternative is to have students of nearby Monmouth University conduct manual surveys. First, an experiment was conducted to assess if few survey points mimicking that of a manual survey could produce similar results to a sonar survey including thousands of points. A sonar survey collected 6,276 points in a 37-acre lake. Random points were selected from the sonar survey to simulate a manual survey. The sonar survey was compared to random points based on lake storage estimates. The difference in the estimates was statistically significant. However, only 45 points estimated lake storage within 5% of the sonar survey. The difference between bathymetric surfaces derived from the sonar and random points revealed one area with large differences in the only deep part of the lake. An average of 5 inches separated the two surfaces. The deviation was small because the bottom of the lake is largely flat. The bottom of the lake varied a foot from the average elevation for 66% of the sonar points. The results are largely positive for the prospect of a field course. Students will be directed to survey more points in the deep part of the lake to strengthen bathymetric mapping and storage estimates. The process will have dual benefits: (1) students will learn a practical skill to join the work force and (2) coastal towns in New Jersey with limited budgets will receive the information they need to guide dredging projects. Interested parties can reach Dr. Fouad at [gfouad@monmouth.edu](mailto:gfouad@monmouth.edu).

**Dr. Richard Veit, Chair of the Department of History and Anthropology at Monmouth University, and Michael Gall of Richard Grubb and Associates** are currently researching “Hidden Shoes and Other Ritual Concealments.” Tucked away behind chimneys and under floorboards in historic houses across the eastern United States are traces of historic magical practices, hidden shoes, and other ritual concealments, purposefully placed to protect the living from malevolent spirits, bless houses, and honor the dead. This practice developed in Europe and

spread to the Americas and Australia. Homeowners placed objects, generally shoes, in or near chimneys, under floor, and sometimes around doors, or in the ceiling. Other, more extensive, ritual concealments of crystals, beads, Native American stone tools, and food offerings have been noted on some African-American archaeological sites from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the southeastern United States. Although an old shoe found in a house may be no more than the historic equivalent of the lost sock in a dryer, or part of a rat's nest, many of them may have had much richer meanings. Veit and Gall are interested in documenting examples of ritual concealments from New Jersey. They are aware of examples from the Staats house in South Bound Brook, the Vermeule-Mundy House in Green Brook, and the Case-Dvoor house in Flemington (indeed, the Case-Dvoor house had several examples). They would love to hear from anyone aware of other ritual concealments. Information on the location of the find, both general—e.g. site or town, and specific—where within the building, is welcome. Any additional information, such as whether the shoe is from a man or woman, child or adult, whether it was worn or new, and its relative age and composition, is also welcome, as is information about other hidden items. Kristen Lapos, Curator of Collections at the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts is also gathering information on ritual concealments for a possible exhibit. Veit and Gall will be sharing their findings with her, and ultimately hope to disseminate the results of their study through presentations and scholarly publications. Interested parties can reach out to the duo at [rveit@monmouth.edu](mailto:rveit@monmouth.edu) or [mgall@rgaincorporated.com](mailto:mgall@rgaincorporated.com).

**Melissa Ziobro, Specialist Professor of Public History at Monmouth University** is currently researching “American Women and Royal Marriages.” The inspiration for this topic, for her, came from the acclaimed historical drama *Downton Abbey*.<sup>1</sup> The series plotline begins in 1912, but a

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<sup>1</sup> Though Professor Ziobro was inspired by the fictional Grantham marriage, invitations to speak on the topic have been frequent as of late thanks to another marriage, yet pending- that of Great Britain's Prince Harry to American actress Meghan Markle, scheduled for May 2018.

key element of the show's storyline had occurred decades earlier off screen when a wealthy young American heiress named Cora Levinson of Cincinnati met and married Robert Crawley, Viscount Downton, the future Earl of Grantham. As part of their marriage contract, Cora's fortune would be tied to the Grantham family's failing estate to prevent it from going bankrupt. In return, Cora would eventually earn the title of Countess of Grantham. While Downton Abbey's Granthams are fictional, the idea of wealthy American heiresses marrying impoverished European nobility is not. So pervasive was the practice that a quarterly publication called *The Titled American* even sprang up, listing American women who successfully married nobility as well as the names of eligible titled bachelors. There were ultimately hundreds of these transatlantic marriages, some more well-known than others, many breathlessly reported by the initially adoring American media. The media, the American public, and even American politicians eventually soured on these marriages as they began to bemoan the flight of American dollars from our shores. Professor Ziobro's research discusses some of the so-called "dollar princesses" of the Gilded Age, with a particular focus on those from NJ: to include Lady Monson (nee Romaine Stone, daughter of General Roy Stone of Morristown NJ), Lady Roberts (nee Elizabeth Marie LaRoche, daughter of William Tell LaRoche of Harrington Park, NJ), Princess Miguel of Braganza (nee Anita Stewart, born in Elberon, NJ)- and more. Who were these women? What motivated them? And how did their "loves lives" impact transatlantic relations, the US economy, and American tax law?