

**Exhibit Review- *Hartshorne: Eight Generations and Their Highlands Estate Called Portland***  
**Curated by Joseph W. Hammond**  
**Open October 7, 2016-July 8, 2017**  
**Monmouth County Historical Association**  
**70 Court Street, Freehold, NJ**  
**DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v3i1.77>**

In 2014 New Jersey celebrated the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. The Monmouth County Historical Association (MCHA) exhibit, *Hartshorne: Eight Generations and Their Highlands Estate Called Portland*, celebrates a family that has called New Jersey home for almost as long. The focus of the exhibit is the Hartshornes and their storied estate, Portland, a sprawling property in northeastern Monmouth County. The exhibit draws from the extensive collections of the Monmouth County Historical Association, the Monmouth County Park System, and important private collections held by Hartshorne family descendants. More historically minded than most, through eight generations the Hartshorne family accumulated an incredible trove of documents, maps, textiles, and personal items, which have allowed a talented curator, Joseph W. Hammond, to present their story and tie it to larger themes in regional and American history. The serendipitous survival of these items forms the basis of an exceptional exhibit of great interest to individuals interested in early American history, transportation history, the California Gold Rush, women's history, and the decorative arts.

The exhibit begins even before one enters the building with a stunning banner decorating the façade of the Monmouth County Historical Association's headquarters on Court Street in Freehold. As one enters the building, the opening panels of the exhibit greet visitors. Special homage is paid to two individuals: Ellen Noonan Adams and Daniel Ward Seitz, former trustees of the MCHA, whose foresight and passion for the past led them to retrieve and save numerous family heirlooms.

The exhibit runs counterclockwise around the main first floor gallery. It begins with a series of spectacular early legal papers, that document Richard Hartshorne's first land purchases in Monmouth County, including a lease of 1677, and a seventeenth-century Indian deed complete with zoomorphic signature. These are true historical treasures. A series of modern maps shows the waxing and waning of the Hartshorne's considerable property. Each of the eight generations of the family is represented by a numbered banner and accompanying artifacts. Although there are too many individual pieces to list them all here, several are especially noteworthy, including some very early maps of northeastern Monmouth County and the Sandy Hook Peninsula. The latter was once part of the Hartshorne's sprawling landholdings. Highlights of the exhibit include some incredible mid-eighteenth century crewel-embroidered bed hangings and an outstanding 1730s leather upholstered armchair made in Boston.

One of the most interesting parts of the exhibit is a selection of fine walking sticks, ranging in date from the late seventeenth century through to the early twentieth century, complete with ownership and provenance information. By the nineteenth century it is possible to put faces with names, and we come eye to eye with several of the Hartshornes in photographs and miniatures. During the mid-nineteenth century, Benjamin Minturn Hartshorne took Horace Greeley's advice and headed west, finding fame and fortune in California. Unlike many of his hopeful contemporaries he also found great wealth, though in steamboat navigation rather than in panning for gold. His story is told and richly illustrated using some spectacular early daguerreotypes of San Francisco and Sacramento. Equally interesting was his wife, the elegant Julia Norton Hartshorne, who died young. One of her spectacular dresses is displayed.

The exhibit continues into the later nineteenth century and twentieth centuries with more recent generations of the family. Linking them all together is their familial homestead, Portland,

established in the late seventeenth century on the banks of the Navesink. Lost once to fire and rebuilt, and subject to numerous remodelings, the property is documented in detail through architectural drawings, paintings, and photographs.

The exhibit concludes with a final panel that highlights the critical connections between several generations of Hartshorne women: Julia Hartshorne Trask, Margaret Willis Hartshorne, and Mary Hartshorne Noonan, and the Monmouth County Historical Association. There is little to criticize about the exhibit. One hopes that a catalog, either online or in print, follows so that the exhibit may live on past its planned closing date in July.

So go see the Hartshornes of Portland on their sojourn in Freehold. They are well worth the visit and they will give you a glimpse of how family histories and genealogies can be used to inform the larger stories of American history. The Monmouth County Historical Association is to be complimented on a job well done.

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