

"Help Save Mount Rose" Presentation

In 2008, a private developer bought the former Western Electric site on the east and west sides of Carter Road. In the General Development plan submitted to Hopewell Township, they asked for a number of variances [especially environmental], and planned to build over 800,000 sq ft of office space (east side) and significant residential housing (west side). They also recognized that the Mount Rose intersection was going to be an impediment to the traffic that would need access to the site. The proposed solution was (basically) dramatically changing the center of Mount Rose to make it unrecognizable as an historic crossroad village.



The articles below were prepared to help educate the larger community about the historic nature of Mount Rose, and gain support for less drastic, better planned and respectful changes.

As it turned out, we were extremely successful on a number of fronts that led to minimal commercial use, no residential development, and the creation of the Mount Rose Preserve.

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Mount Rose Community Preservation Group

September 2008

Three articles by Sheila Fields, prepared by the Mount Rose Community Preservation Group for publication in the Hopewell Valley News, September 4, 12, & 19, 2008, and for presentation to the Hopewell Township Committee regarding improvement concepts for the Mount Rose intersection.

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 - Improvement Concepts for the Mount Rose Intersection

The Gardens of Mount Rose

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

HOW MOUNT ROSE GOT ITS NAME

By Sheila Fields

SPECIAL POINTS OF IN- TEREST:

- All of the concept plans include a proposed Rose Garden in honor of the origin of our name; to be constructed on the sliver of Township property in the southern apex of the intersection.
- The rocky ground has produced many field stones which subsequently were used for stone walls and edging

You've probably heard the story. Mount Rose was named for the beautiful roses in the gardens of a local resident. But what do we know about the gardens or the gardener that so impressed the local school master who (it is claimed) said '...we should call this "Mount Rose"...', and it stuck.

The village later to be known as Mount Rose started as a crossroads between the "Hopewell road" built in 1769 to link the village of Hopewell to "the King's highway" (now Route 206) and the road (built over an old Indian trail by the King) that linked Pennington to Rocky Hill. In 1818, following the death of Andrew Blackwell, the land he had owned and presumably farmed (it's referred to a Plantation in the old deeds) - surrounding the crossroads on all sides - was sold off in smaller lots that became the kernel from which the settlement would sprout.

Some 11 acres in the western angle were sold to Robert Stout, and for some years the settlement was known as "Stout's corners".

The land that made up the eastern angle of the intersection had been owned by Major Abner Houghton (1754-1817) - a nephew of the more famous Revolutionary War hero, Colonel Joab Houghton of Hopewell, and his wife, the former Margaret Van Dyke.

In 1824, the first stone school house was built on what is now the north side of Cherry Valley Rd, and it is assumed the renaming of the village as "Mount Rose" by the school master occurred shortly after that.

The gardener - Margaret (Van Dyke) Houghton (1763-1838)

The Van Dyke family is well known as a pioneer family of the area, tracing their lineage back to Holland in the 1600's, and settling in the area known as Harlingen by 1758.

Margaret Van Dyke was married to Abner Houghton around 1785, and had two daughters, Catherine and Elizabeth, but no sons; and so the Houghton name died out of this branch of the family with the death of Abner in 1817.



The Houghton Homestead

The Gardens of Mount Rose

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

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Author's Note: Catherine married Robert Chambers, Jr.—the founder of Chambersburg (now a district of Trenton), while Elizabeth married Abraham Christopher Beekman—one of the Beekmans of Griggstown.

The Gardens

The following description was written in 1946 by Susan Stout Weart, who (at the time) was the Historian for the Colonel Joseph Stout Chapter, of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) and a former curator at the Hopewell Museum.

“Beautiful roses – surely they were not at all like the ones we know today. Some of the oldest roses in this community were the damask, really the rose of Damascus, the maiden blush, a double flower with a pale pink center, the old...red rose with five or nine petals and a large yellow center, the Hermosa, a pink rose, the sweet brier or eglantine, of course, at one corner of the garden. All of these varieties spread along the ground similar to our common wild rose. The yellow rose grew tall and was trained over a frame. No garden was complete without it.”

According to Miss Weart, several watercolor paintings of roses (presumably from the gardens of Mount Rose) were painted around 1820 by the daughter of the later school master (Ralph Sansbury) who ‘named’ the village; and these were bequeathed to the Hopewell Museum. The present curator is presently conducting a search to determine if they have survived.

An earlier description comes from the granddaughter of Margaret Houghton, Margaret Chambers Hall, who wrote in the first few



The Houghton Homestead

The Gardens of Mount Rose

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

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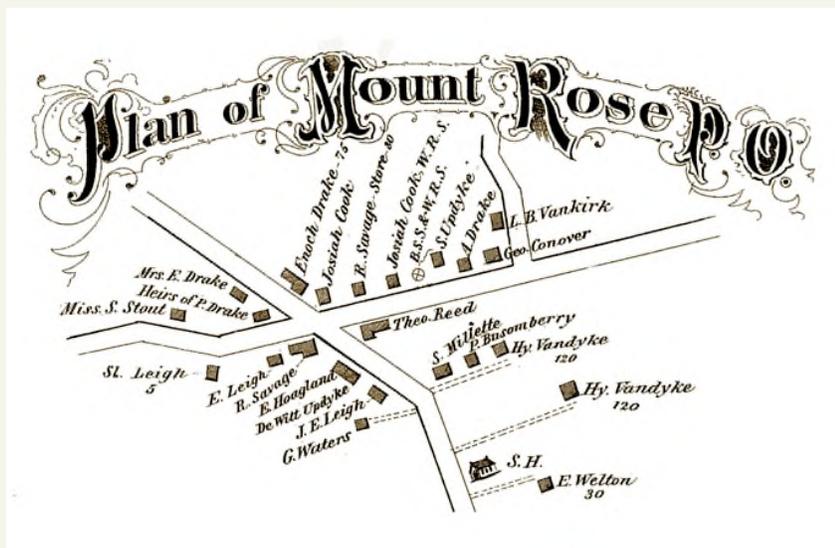
years of the 20th century: “On each side of the gate opening from the road were great lilac bushes, one purple and one white. Roses climbed the porch, bordered the walks and bloomed in the garden. I remember them, when as a child I visited Grandma whose namesake I was, - great red velvet roses and exquisite pink ones.

The exact location of the gardens still need discovery, and even in 1946, Susan Stout Weart wrote: “The family history of roses might be intriguing as genealogy if one made a hobby. Perhaps someday a record of this fine garden may come to light.”

The members of the Mount Rose Community Preservation Group are also hopeful, and are undertaking additional research to search for a more complete record.



The Houghton Homestead



Mount Rose in 1875

Beyond the Historic Buildings . . .

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

THE HISTORIC COMMUNITY

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The purpose of the (now defunct) by-pass was to preserve the crossroads, that purpose is no less significant now, simply because by-pass effort failed
- The concept plans that we have developed emphasize the need to preserve the character of the 19th Century Crossroads village

Much has been told about the various historic buildings that made up the village of Mount Rose – but what about the community? In part two, we focus on the legacy of the people of Mount Rose.

By Sheila Fields

The village of Mount Rose

The village - lying as it does on a well traveled crossroads - became prosperous in the mid-19th century. Direct roads connected it with Rocky Hill, Princeton, Pennington, Glenmore, Hopewell, and perhaps the oldest of all “Aunt Molly’s Road” - a direct line of communication between the Stout families of Mt Rose and those in nearby Stoutsburg, and a trail leading to the northern part of the state. These roads suggest the village was an important center of trade long before cultivated roses were imported from China.

History tells that there was a store, a blacksmith (Benjamin Van Kirk) , a wheelwright (Thomas Reed), a shoemaker (Josiah Cook), a distillery (Nathaniel H. Drake), a warehouse for agricultural supplies, a harness shop, and twenty dwellings. But even by 1895 – when the railroads had been built in the valley, and commerce was shifting to Hopewell Borough – the population of Mount Rose was still about 150.

Alexander Waters built a hotel in 1835 but after only two years it was converted into a dwelling, suggesting that the close proximity to other communities (and relatives) obviated the need for commercial lodging.

The “General Store” restored by Max Hayden, and protected today by its Historic Preservation status, is not the only location of the store - which had actually shifted among several buildings in the village since it was originally built by Richard Stout in 1822.

As shop keeper, he was succeeded by Josiah Cook and John Savidge (1832). Elias Griggs was the next merchant (1834), followed by Paul M. Tulane (1850), next came Philemon Golden (1854); and finally in 1858, the most well known - Reuben Savidge - became the proprietor.



**The General Store
“Before”**

Beyond the Historic Buildings . . .

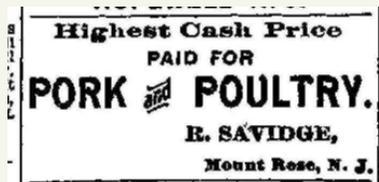
MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

187 We again call attention to the condition of affairs at Mount Rose, in this county. This is the rottenest hole in this county—and probably in the State. Under the militia law, a militia company has been organized, composed largely of men who do not hesitate to declare their opposition to the government—many of them are going so far as to profess allegiance to Jeff Davis. These gentlemen will bear looking after. Instead of some some of them should have a rope.

1861 article in Trenton Times describes the “Rebels of Mt Rose”

And politics were not an unknown “flash point” in Mt Rose. At the beginning of the Civil war, a militia was formed in Mount Rose whose loyalty to the Union was questioned in a Trenton Gazette article of the time that reported “many of them going so far as to profess allegiance to Jeff Davis”. The fact that nothing more is heard about this group suggests that the rhetoric on both sides was hotter than any true intent to take subsequent action.

Reuben Savidge was a born marketer, and expanded the store - and himself into a major agricultural supplies dealer – particularly fertilizer. His large print advertising in the Hopewell Herald was often accompanied by a testimonial and an offer of credit for those who ask. His biggest marketing splash was the Oxen Roast – which he hosted annually for several years for his best customers, numbering in the hundreds. He was apparently a quite successful merchant, as he is regularly listed in State agricultural reports as the largest shipper of agricultural goods in the area.



But he was also involved in politics – in 1872 appointed to a position in the Democratic Party representing Mercer County, and as Democratic “Inspector of Elections” in the Hopewell precinct in 1880, when a recount overturned the previously declared victory.

But Savidge was not the only well known business in the village. In about 1873, Thomas B. Jackson – a Brooklyn NY resident - purchased land at the eastern edge of the village and built the “Fair View Stock Farm”. A well know horse breeder for trotters, Jackson was best known locally for stud services to local Hopewell area farmers, but managed to get at least one mare listed in the Wallace American Trotting Register in 1890.

And commerce was not the only “fame” for Mount Rose , since 1840 (and possibly earlier) – the community hosted the “ Mt Rose Station” - a scientific surveying site near the geological “Mt Rose” - used for triangulation during



Beyond the Historic Buildings . . .

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP



1927 Harley Ad —
Mt Rose & Princeton

The Community Club of Mount Rose will hold a strawberry festival at the schoolhouse June 3d. Strawberries, ice cream, cake, candy, etc., will be on sale. 5-26-2tp

1921 notice of the annual
Strawberry Festival



The General Store - "After"

Now restored and listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places

US government coastal surveys used for making astronomical observations & magnetic declination measurements (through at least 1888).

But even in the early 20th century, business at Mount Rose continued to diversify to include a furrier, a number of poultry farms, even a Harley Davidson dealership – selling “motorbikes” to the surrounding area. And the Mount Rose community was well known for holding its annual Strawberry festival, as well as numerous community events (picnics, readings, and preachers at local homes as well as the school house)

And some “fame” – we would rather do without. The sad connection of Mount Rose to the Lindbergh kidnapping tragedy however has been overblown.

Bronx is north of Hopewell, New Jersey. The body was found in Mt. Rose, three miles south of the Lindbergh home. If Haupt-

From the book “Crime of the Century”

Reported to be the location where the body of the child was found, the actual location (referred to as “Mt Rose heights”) is much closer to the Hopewell Borough border – than the Mount Rose village.

The community of Mount Rose continues to evolve. Despite the rejection of Mount Rose as a proposed “historic district” in 1990’s, and the subsequent physical relocation of several homes away from the unprotected intersection, the community has fought forcefully against the excessive commercial development proposed for the east side of Carter Road which has, and continues to threaten our community.

In part three of this series, we will explore the future of Mount Rose and share with you our vision for the ‘village’ in the 21st century.

The Once and Future Village

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

OUR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- The Mount Rose crossroad has historic significance to the Township; and any roadway improvements should not eclipse the historic character
- The purpose of the (now defunct) bypass was to preserve the crossroads, that purpose is no less significant now, simply because the bypass effort failed
- Pedestrian traffic at the Mount Rose intersection is not a priority given the low density of the current population

This is the third of three articles prepared by the Mount Rose Community Preservation Group as background for an upcoming presentation to be made to the Hopewell Township Committee regarding improvements to the Mount Rose Intersection.

By Sheila Fields

The residents of Mount Rose have fought for many, many years against what to us is a wholly inappropriate scope of commercial development on the former Western Electric site in the south eastern section of Hopewell Township on Carter Road, south of the Mount Rose intersection. The amount of peak traffic generated at full build out of the property's currently approved General Development Plan and related Preliminary Site Plan threatens to fundamentally alter the character of our historic crossroads village.

So it should come as no surprise that the "traffic ameliorization plan" presented by the current owners of the site, Berwind Property Group (BPG), stunned the local community. As presented earlier this year at the Planning Board hearings seeking the Preliminary Site Plan approval, the BPG's traffic engineers' preliminary concept diagram showed a vast expansion of the paved area of the intersection which obliterated the historic road configuration with 12 traffic lanes, including turning lanes and bus corridors. Little, if any, consideration was given by the BPG traffic engineers to traffic calming measures and other good traffic planning opportunities.

The Mount Rose Community Preservation Group was formed by concerned area residents as a follow-up to those Planning Board hearings to develop a plan for the intersection and immediately adjacent areas that will recognize the historical significance of the Mount Rose community and preserve and enhance those attributes while at the same time enhancing the esthetics and quality of life of the Mount Rose community.

What follows is a preview of our concept plans, which we will present in full to the Hopewell Township Committee at a future meeting, with the hope of demonstrating that there is a better way that can meet the needs of the community and the residents of the Mount Rose area.



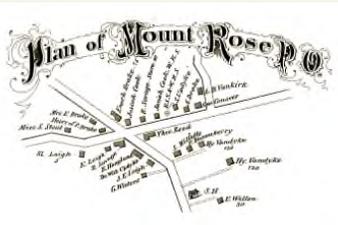
Aerial photo of Mount Rose 1985

The Once and Future Village

MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Bicycle traffic at the crossroads is a priority if we can accommodate improvements without significantly compromising item #1; the crossroad is already a vital hub for area bicyclists
- Vehicular speed must be controlled – addressing resident concerns about excessive speed during non-peak hours when most accidents have occurred.
- Movement of vehicular traffic through the intersection must flow more smoothly during peak traffic hours



Map of Mount Rose
1875

The primary design concepts which are at the heart of our proposals are that the Mount Rose crossroad has historic significance to the Township; and any roadway improvements should not eclipse the historic character.

The purpose of the (now defunct) bypass was to preserve the crossroads, that purpose is no less significant now, simply because bypass effort failed. We believe that vehicular speed must be controlled – addressing resident concerns about excessive speed during non-peak hours when most accidents occur.

Movement of vehicular traffic through the intersection must flow more smoothly during peak traffic hours. Further, any acceptable design must manage existing capacity better as its primary goal; rather than increase capacity of roadway in advance of projected traffic volumes.

Our proposals emphasize the need to implement any changes incrementally and monitor results before moving to increased interventions.

First option: Improve existing conditions. Without widening the roadway, add traffic actuated signal, regrade the intersection to eliminate hazardous “crown” (elevation) at the center of the intersection, and stripe pavement for greater clarity. Examine the list of traffic calming proposals (not included here) in the order which is both least destructive and most economical.

Second option: In addition to the above - improve road alignment with a slight change of Pennington-Rocky Hill Road with Cherry Valley Road, and ease the right turn curve from Hopewell Princeton Road onto west-bound Pennington-Rocky Hill Road.

Third option: Install a double midi round-about. Hire a round-about traffic engineering specialist to design the appropriate geometry, and avoid the risks of well documented design failures.

In all cases, we add a bike park, and consider the feasibility of supportive options (such as water fountain, trash receptacles, signage, lighting, and appropriate bicycle crossings). Due to the primary concern of preserving the crossroads configuration, bicycle lanes were examined but deemed unworkable due to related engineering standards. However, improvements to the road surfaces and better definition of the edges of the roadway are included in all options.

The Once and Future Village

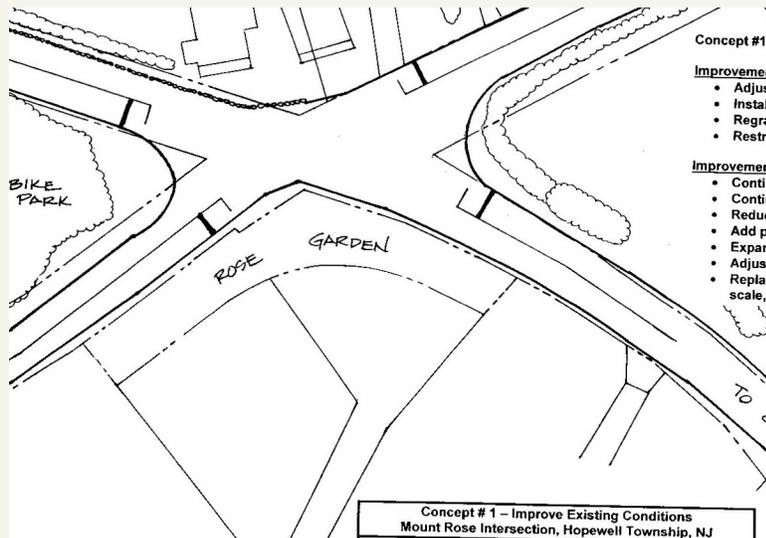
MOUNT ROSE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION GROUP

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Any acceptable design must manage existing capacity better as its primary goal; rather than increase capacity of roadway in advance of projected of traffic volumes.
- Our designs should provide options
- Implementation of any option should NOT make improvements for future development that doesn't yet exist.

All options also include the conversion of the recently acquired Township property (adjacent to the intersection) to a Rose Garden – celebrating the history of Mount Rose and significantly improving the appearance of the crossroads— while maintain the current alignment.

Our intention is to work in a positive manner and provide guidance to Hopewell Township regarding plans for the intersection and surrounding area that are endorsed and supported by the residents. Rather than acting as opponents, the residents' desire is to work positively in cooperation with the Township and Mercer County in planning for the intersection and surrounding area.



A portion of the Option #1 concept diagram



Help Save Mount Rose!

MOUNT ROSE
COMMUNITY
PRESERVATION
GROUP

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A B O U T U S

The Mount Rose Community Preservation Group was formed by concerned area residents as a follow-up to BPG Planning Board hearings to develop a plan for the intersection and immediately adjacent areas that will recognize the historical significance of the Mount Rose community and preserve and enhance those attributes while at the same time enhancing the esthetics and quality of life of the Mount Rose community.

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Mount Rose Crossroads sign