



**morris county park commission**

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## Speedwell Site Collection: Finding Aid

### Overview of Collection

Creator:	Various members of Speedwell Staff, Local Morris County Residents
Title:	Speedwell Site Collection
Date:	1839-1988
Quantity:	2 boxes, 1 linear foot

### Restrictions

#### Important Information for Users of the Collection

This material is open for research with limited restrictions under the conditions of the Morris County Park Commission archives access policy. Records may be copied for use in individual scholarly or personal research; however, as with all materials in the Morris County Park Commission, researchers are responsible for obtaining copyright permission to use material from the collection.

### Administrative Information

#### Preferred Citation

Speedwell Site Papers, Courtesy of the Morris County Park Commission.

#### Acquisition Information

Many of the records forming the Speedwell Site Papers were collected or produced by Speedwell Village or Historic Speedwell staffs. While some archival holdings had previously been processed, such as an article donated by the Junior League (HS1976.50), they had not been organized into a Collection. Additionally, Thompson McDaniel donated materials compiled by his deceased wife Mary McDaniel during the Junior League Restoration of the Vail House in 1976 (HS2012.6). A majority of the records were inventoried during Madison High School Volunteer service learning project June 2012 (HS2012.2). Subsequent donations by Commissioner Richard Seabury (HS2012.7) and Mark Sutherland (HS2012.15.3) were processed as part of this Collection.

#### Processing Information

Surveyed, sorted, and arranged by Melanie Bump and Chris Rain, June 2012.

Described by Melanie Bump, May 2013.

Finding Aid updated by Katie Humphreys, June 2020.

**HS2013.3- Fonds, Parent Record**

### Historical Note

Historic Speedwell was incorporated as Speedwell Village in 1966 as a non-profit, educational historic site. The non-profit ran the site from 1966-2001, completing restoration programs, conducting tours and creating exhibits. The Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders acquired Speedwell Village and placed the site under Park Commission stewardship in September 2002. Re-named Historic Speedwell, this acquisition ensured the preservation of this unique and vital historic site.

Historic Speedwell interprets, protects and preserves the homestead of Stephen Vail (1780-1864) ironmaster of the Speedwell Ironworks. Known as the “Birth Place of the Telegraph” the site is on the New Jersey State and National Historic Register, in addition it is home to the National Historic Landmark the Factory Building. In January 1838, Stephen’s son, Alfred Vail (1807-1859), in partnership with Samuel F.B. Morse, perfected and demonstrated the electro-magnetic telegraph on the second floor of the Factory Building

Little is left of the forge, workmen’s cottages, and workshops once used by the Speedwell Ironworks around Speedwell Lake (1801-1876) as the remaining Ironworks buildings burned in a fire in 1908. What still remains is Stephen Vail’s homestead which includes five original buildings: The National Historic Landmark Factory Building, the Vail Home, the Homestead Carriage House, the 1849 Carriage House, and the Granary. Three additional buildings were moved to the 7-½-acre site in the 1960s, The Moses Estey House, Ford Cottage, and L’Hommedieu House, to the site to preserve them from the impact of urban renewal, making Speedwell Village one of the first major examples of historic preservation in Morris County.

The Vail family members were actively involved in Morristown’s business, religious, political, and charitable organizations. Stephen’s son George Vail (1809 –1875) was involved with the creation of the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum at Morristown, known as Greystone, as the hospital was built on a tract of land that he owned. The idea for the facility was conceived in 1870 and the hospital opened on August 17, 1876. Other important activities that shaped Morristown and its residents during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the construction of the Morris Canal in 1822, the return of the Marquis de Lafayette July 1825, and the murder trial and conviction of Antoine Le Blanc in summer, 1833.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Speedwell Site Collection materials relate to the institutional history of the site as a non-profit and governmental institution. These documents are an excellent source of information for researchers interested in the institutional and site related history of Historic Speedwell, early historic preservation efforts, and local history related articles and research. Additional materials related to local Morristown history add to the interpretation of the site and are used as a resource for research and display.

## **Associated Image Collection**

The Speedwell Image Collection has been indexed and has its own [Finding Aid](#). The Collection represents examples from nearly all types of photography from the earliest daguerreotypes in the 1840s through modern digital photography and the subjects include the Vail Family, their descendants, the development and eventual decline of the Speedwell Ironworks.

## **Arrangement**

The Speedwell Site Collection is organized into 3 series relating to the institutional history of the site as a non-profit and governmental institution. The arrangement of the collection reflects the natural groupings found within the Collection: Speedwell Institutional History; Buildings on Site; Morristown and 19<sup>th</sup> century History

**Series 1: Speedwell Institutional History**

Articles, Publications, Research, Letters related to Historic Speedwell and Speedwell Village history as a non-profit, museum, historic site, and governmental institution. The materials document restorations, events, activities, and research conducted by staff, volunteers, Vail/Lidgerwood family members and local media.

**Series 2: Buildings on Site**

Articles, Publications, Wallpaper, Records, and Correspondence related to the buildings at Historic Speedwell. The materials document restorations, historic room finishing, transfer of land title and mortgages.

**Series 3: Morristown and 19<sup>th</sup> Century History**

Articles, Publications, Records, Correspondence related to local Morristown history. These materials add to the overall interpretation of the history of Historic Speedwell within the context of local history.

**Speedwell Collection**

**Series 1: Speedwell Institutional History**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	
1	1 a-b	Pamphlet- Highlights New Jersey May 1837, pg. 47; Cartoon Illustration Speedwell Ironworks. Survey of Speedwell Lake Railroad, by Fredrick S. Smith 1897
	2	Research Compiled by William V. Lidgerwood; map, newspaper, articles 1933-1973
	3	Morristown Advertisement Vail and Telegraph
	4	Original Morristown Letterhead with Alfred Vail and Samuel Morse
	5	Reproduced Morristown Letterhead 1988
	6	Paperwork related to incorporation of Speedwell Inc., 1966-1982
	7 a-b	Material regarding Speedwell Village, articles, pamphlets, advertisement. 1978
	8	Barbara Hoskins Research Notes
	9 a-b	Research, Notes, Reports and Information on or compiled by Mrs. Mary McDaniel Chairman of the Vail House Restoration of the Junior League of Morristown, for the restoration of the Vail House, ca. 1970-1980. (HS2012.6)
	10	Article-Speedwell Village

**Series 2: Buildings on Site**

Box	1	11	Vail House-Wallpaper samples from bedrooms, 1974.
		12 a-c	Estey House-Wallpaper samples, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor rooms
		12 d	Estey House- Records on Meeker Family related to the Estey House, including William Meeker burial arrangements.
		12 e	Estey House- Records of the Heslin Family related to the Estey House: notes, taxes, correspondence with Housing Authority of Morristown, (1913-1963).
		12 f	Estey House- Records of the Allen Family related to the Estey House: mortgages, title, bonds, indentures, (1870-1884).

Box 2 1 Items found in L'Hommedieu House Sept. 1992, Letter to Mrs. McLeod, page from church  
booklet 1907, misc. scraps of paper, ca. 1900-1950  
2 a-d L'Hommedieu wallpaper samples

I:\2016 Accessions\Audio Accession 2016\HS2016.2- Oral History, Marge Brady 5-19-2016

Craigmeur Framed Storage: Framed Site Plans, Speedwell Village, HS2022.5.2-3

### Series 3: Morristown and 19<sup>th</sup> Century History

Box 2 3 Morris Co, History, ca. 1970  
4 Washington Park History, ca. 1980  
5 Article found on 6/30/1998 tucked in The Path of Pilgrim Church between pg. 198-199, paper  
from hat box (HS1976.50)  
6 19<sup>th</sup> Century Fashion Plates and prints  
7 Presidential Plates  
10 Envelope addressed to Stanley M. Have, stamp. Package piece addressed to Mrs. Maggio,  
Kimber Newspaper piece- "The Family Story" paper  
11 Industrial Technology, 1867, 1839  
12 Bank Notes, 1856, 1840, 1920s  
13 Mourning Print, Mourning Envelope  
14 Newspaper and Wallpaper pieces.  
15 Newspaper Wedding Announcement (HS2012.15.3).  
16 Booklet; *The Morristown Ghost*. 1896 reprint of the 1814 edition. Unbound. (2005.30.36b)

Map Case 1 Drawer 1 - Map State Asylum for the Insane, Morris Plains, Hanover Township, NJ. 1887 (HS2012.7)

### Related Items

Box 2 8 Booklet, Gulliver's Travels, HS 1991.193, Circulating Library  
9 4 Almanacs, 1825-1843, Circulating Library  
Paper box (HS1976.50), Vail House Collections Storage Front  
*S.S. Savannah Commemorative Bottle* made by Speedwell Village (HS2022.6.1), Vail House  
Collections Storage Front

- [Truman Vail Diary Research and Transcription Finding Aid](#) (6 boxes of materials)
- Bartenstein Research Papers – two boxes of research notecards, document box of research files, five chapters of unpublished manuscript about Alfred Vail. (HS2018.5)
- Scan of Catalog - George Vail & Company Speedwell Ironworks
- *Machinist, Millwrights, Iron and Brass Founders*. Lent for scanning by Ivins Smith in 2016. Item is not original.
  - I: Drive 2016 Accessions: JPEG 2016 Accession: HS 2016 Accessions: (HS Ironworks Booklet Scan)

### Existence of related materials in other Collections:

North Jersey History & Genealogy Center, Morristown & Morris Township Library

<http://www.jfpl.org/NJHistoryHome.cfm>

Vail Telegraph Collection, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C.

[http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\\_arc\\_217214](http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_217214)

Alfred Vail genealogical research papers

The New York Public Library Humanities and Social Sciences Library, the Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy

<http://www.newyorkpubliclibrary.com/sites/default/files/archivalcollections/pdf/nygbcoll166.pdf>

Alfred Vail (1807-1859), Inventor, Papers, the New Jersey Historical Society

<http://www.jerseyhistory.org/findingaiddirnb.php?dir=EAD/faid0500&aid=mg0050>