

**FLASHBACK ~ 100 YEARS AGO DECEMBER 1921**

**Seven Women Serve on Grand Jury**

*Somerset Democrat, December 9, 1921, page 1*

That the Court House will never be the same again to the “old timers” was proven Tuesday morning when, for the first time in the history of the county, seven women were present to serve on the grand jury. Their presence placed an entirely different atmosphere on the usual monotonous opening session of the court. Mr. Justice Parker, in addressing the jurors, said: “ladies and gentlemen;” but Sheriff Conkling was remiss in one of his duties, having left off the word “ladies” on the printed oath, which is handed to each juror, as a regular practice. It was plain to be seen that the veteran court crier, John S. Bunn, was visibly affected as he opened court with his impressed summons. County Clerk Voorhees was also deeply affected as he administered the oath to the women members. None of them asked to be excused from service. Wilhelmina Bainbridge, of Millstone, was the only woman absent. In fact, the whole Court House was buzzing with excitement—except the seven women members of the jury, who were apparently keenly interested in the new civic duties they were about to perform, and not the least excited.

**Old Somerset and New**

*Somerset Democrat, December 9, 1921, page 10*

**Discovery of 1824 Somerville Messenger: Visit of General La Fayette 197 YEARS AGO**

Mrs. Laura T. Vander Veer, of Doughty Avenue [Somerville], while looking through some old books a few days ago, chanced upon a copy of the Somerville Messenger and Somerset County Advertiser for Thursday morning, September 9, 1824, being No. 4 of Vol. I of that publication. ... It contains much of local interest, the names of county officials of the time, the geographic construction of the county, comments upon the presidential campaign of Jackson and Adams, but most interesting of all, the story of the visit of General Lafayette to this vicinity.

William Hoagland was high sheriff of Somerset at the time this paper appeared, and John Frelinghuysen, clerk and surrogate. The former had not yet abandoned the custom of signing his official documents as being dated at Bridgewater for the newer and more popular name of Somerville.

According to advertisements appearing for the election of delegates to the State political conventions at Trenton, there were but seven municipalities in Somerset county, Bernards, Bedminster, Bridgewater, Franklin, Hillsborough, Montgomery, and Warren. Each political party was allowed two delegates to the convention from each municipality. The boundaries of the county were different also and extended to and contained a part of the present City of New Brunswick.



The old paper stated that “letters from Boston give a minute description of the General’s reception in that city. The enthusiasm expressed by the immense concourse, at the moment of the General’s entering Boston, was greater than I ever witnessed. Some leapt up, clapping their hands in an ecstasy of joy, and others burst into tears. From a window we looked down upon the multitude, extending along the road as far as the eye could reach, all intent on expressing their respect and gratitude to a public benefactor...”

But Somerset also had its interest in the visit of Lafayette and we read: “In compliance with the invitation of the committee of the Corporation of the New-Brunswick, who are making arrangements for the reception of La Fayette, we understand that General Frelinghuysen of the Somerset Brigade, has requested the Field, Staff, and other Officers of his Brigade, to hold themselves in readiness, fully equipped and mounted, to proceed to Brunswick and join in paying the Nation’s Guest that attention and respect which are so richly his due.”

Lafayette did come to New Brunswick, passing over the county line road between Somerset and Middlesex, and his reception there was no less than in other parts of the country. This county had the distinction of entertaining the country’s great benefactor, for a stop was made on the Somerset county side of Albany Street, where horses were changed before the General proceeded. *(Image: Lafayette visits Newark, 1824. Newark Public Library)*