

HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

FROM: June Kennedy, Publicity

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FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE SOMERSET HILLS

Sponsored by THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE SOMERSET HILLS

BERNARDS TWP.

Six homes with architecture spanning almost three centuries (1830 - 2003) will welcome visitors at the 15th Holiday House Tour, an event sponsored by The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills on Sunday, December 2, from 12 Noon to 5 P.M.

Included are an early workman's cottage, one of the smallest buildings in its town; a Gothic Revival cottage of 1855; a simple farmhouse, circa 1865, later configured and spacious for a large family; a Sears Roebuck pattern book house of 1927, all in Basking Ridge; and two Far Hills mansions, a brick 1998 Federal styled estate on five acres with 14 rooms, and an 2003 authentic copy of an antebellum Louisiana - Mississippi style estate with Georgian details.

Set on a street of small houses, the workman's cottage is a centuries old traditional type referred to as an "I-House", reflecting that the building is only one room deep and two stories high. The house was likely built in the early decades of the 19th century for someone probably employed in a local shop. The exterior includes wide clapboards and an asymmetrical facade. When the current owner moved in 30+ years ago, there was a wood stove used for heat. Major interior changes included removing the wall between the original two downstairs rooms and rebuilding a closed up fireplace. A small room added last year next to the kitchen provides for a compact computer and television. The owner uses the entire house to display his collections which include Victorian dog collars, dog themed art, and "almost every book written about dogs." While most of the collection is English, all furniture pieces are American antiques.

The Gothic Revival cottage, circa 1855, compact in structure, has a welcoming front porch of a single balustrade railing with turned spindles. The house's interior reveals exposed beam ceilings, moldings, with much of the original wide planked flooring visible. During a restoration, vintage wood doors were added. Original windows are two over two and Gothic arched with operable shutters. The house is set back much further than its neighbors. There are six rooms on the first floor and two upstairs. Interior decorating has a decided British influence, since the owner is English. The library, with its book lined walls, is a reader's delight. There is an authentic dollhouse replica of the cottage on view in the living room, built by the owner.

An 1865 simple farmhouse was updated and configured by its current owners. The result is a home with a warm and nurturing feeling with room for a large family. A simplified Gothic styled building with its main gable facing the road, it exudes charm and has furnishings appropriate of its time. The two over two windows are original. There are French doors in the dining room leading to a terrace and a patio off the kitchen allows al fresco dining. The main gable faces the road and at the gable the shingles are overlapped. The house's main entry is a paved courtyard. There is a provenance for most of the furnishings. The house is located on about three acres on

the east side of the main road.

An authentic 1927 Sears Roebuck pattern book house, the residence has its original flooring, dark oak moldings and other appointments of the era and sits on 1 1/3 acres with a semi circular driveway. Popular in the early 20th Century, these homes were shipped via railroad and arrived in installments. The 1927 catalog purchase price was \$1,797.00! A treat is the potting shed and greenhouse added by a previous owner. A spacious home, it is furnished with distinctive objects from faraway places.

Built in 1998 on five acres, the brick Federal styled residence, reminiscent of the 1790s, has a circular paved stone courtyard. There are four large and four smaller Corinthian columns at the front entrance, with framed panels of swags adorning the front, which flank the oak doubled door. The formal gardens have two fountains. There is inlaid flooring throughout. The sunken living room has an Adams style fireplace mantel. There is a total of 14 rooms, including a tiled solarium, six bedrooms, and exercise, restaurant and theater rooms on the lower level. The Mansion its many windows, has a light and airy presence.

A 2003 mansion authentically copied from an 1839 antebellum Louisiana Mississippi estate has 22 Doric columns, a galleried upper promenade with colonnaded raised terrace below. The home has 14 rooms with a marble entrance foyer and a Doric fluted columned entry into the grand foyer with spectacular staircase. The fireplaces have herringbone brick backs and there are 11 1/2 foot ceilings and inlaid flooring throughout. The front door has a leaded fanlight and sidelights. In the library/study is an elaborate wrought iron spiral staircase. Mahogany bookshelves, doors and woodwork are prevalent. There is a colonnaded walkway to the terrace, pool and garages. Construction took two years to complete a combination of both northern and southern colonial architecture on five plus acres.

The Brick Academy, 15 West Oak Street, Basking Ridge, headquarters of the historical society, serves as hospitality center for the tour. Built in 1809, it is a fine example of the simple, serviceable public buildings of the Federal period. Proceeds of the house tour will be used for the continued restoration of the Academy, which is listed on the NJ and National Registers of Historic Places.

Tickets for the house tour are \$25.00 each and may be obtained by sending a check and a self addressed stamped business envelope to: THSSH, P.C. Box 136, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920. A tour map will be sent with the ticket. Houses may be visited in any order. At the first tour home, a program will be given to each person. As ticket sales are limited, reservations must be received by November 24. The tour will be held regardless of weather. For further information visit The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills website at www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org or , call (908) 647-2241.

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