



# 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

## The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

Submitted by Marcella A. Miccolis, Chairman

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The Board of Trustees comprises 16 members and convened nine times during 2010. The board said farewell to retiring Trustee Mildred Van Dyke and welcomed new Trustee Paula Axt. General membership meetings, which include business updates, event announcements and guest speakers, were conducted six times during the year.

### Executive Summary

THSSH played a significant role in the year-long celebration of Bernards Township's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary with event announcements in the Society's newsletter *Inside the Brick Academy*; Reprints of the pictorial history book 'Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons' by Trustee June O. Kennedy; Archival information provided to Bernardsville News; Research assistance provided to Kristin Fox, Bernards Township curriculum supervisor; Research assistance provided in connection with Ridge High School tile mural for town hall; Bernards Township 1960 bicentennial exhibit in Bernardsville Library; Commemorative garden at the Brick Academy in collaboration with the Basking Ridge Garden Club; Custom [www.bernards250.com](http://www.bernards250.com) website expanded the cooperative online dialogue for THSSH website visitors; 'June in June' program of never-before-seen local artifacts co-sponsored by the Bernards Township Library; 'Open House' at the Brick Academy with exclusive Bernards Township history exhibits during Charter Day and Weekend Journey Through the Past; and the 16<sup>th</sup> biennial Holiday House Tour held on Sunday, December 5, highlighted Bernards municipal building in honor of the Township's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Other major THSSH programs, detailed in the following report, include Community Outreach; Speaker Program; Historic Preservation; Education; Online/Internet Communications; Brick Academy Utilization; Fund Raisers; Artifacts; Archives; Consultation & Clerical; and Membership.

## Community Outreach

In order to provide opportunities for the community to gain an understanding of the mission of THSSH and to raise consciousness of the historical heritage of the Somerset Hills, the 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization participates in many Somerset County, local town and history-related programs. This year's events included Charter Day; Memorial Day Parade; Teen Volunteer Night; Bernardsville Unity Day; Lord Stirling 1770s Festival; and Somerset County's 'Weekend Journey through the Past'.

In addition:

- Historic artifacts from THSSH collections are displayed at the Bernards Township municipal building, neighborhood libraries, local schools, and community events.
- *Free* museum tours are provided to educators, scout troops, senior citizens, and other non-profit groups.
- The Historical Society has been working with the Basking Ridge Garden Club to improve the grounds around the Brick Academy. This year, the west side of the building was totally cleaned and replanted with roses and liriop.

## Speaker Program

Conducted at the General Membership Meetings, it comprises a professional group of notable speakers. The programs are *free*, held at the Academy, and are advertised to THSSH members and the general public. This past year included: What Not to Wear in the 18th Century by *Kimberly Costa*; Songs from the Pre-Revolutionary Era by *Nancy Schill & Charlie Pellegrino*; 'The War Man' by *Robert A. Mayer*; Songs for Halloween by *Matthew Dodd*; and 'A Printer on the Eve of Revolution' by *Gordon Bond*.

## Historic Preservation

1. As a result of a policy change announced in December 2009, the Historic Preservation Committee provided no written comments to the Bernards Township planning or zoning boards regarding development or variance applications during 2010. A reminder was sent to the Township Committee in December 2010.
2. As part of Bernards Township's 250 anniversary celebration, the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead – which represents three centuries of Bernards Township history – was selected by the Historic Preservation Committee as the sole recipient of the 2010 Historic Preservation Award in May.
3. Donations to THSSH in memory of Lorraine Passmore, a founding member of the Historic Preservation Committee who died in late 2009, have been designated to support historic preservation projects. The Historic Preservation Committee designed a scholarship program to be funded by the donations, which will be announced in January 2011.
4. Historic Preservation Committee members met with numerous residents during the year to discuss a variety of proposed projects that involved historic buildings, including in Bernards Township, the barn at the Boudinot-Southard-Ross property, dwellings at 48 East Oak Street and 135 South Finley Avenue, the manse at 35 Church Street, and in Bernardsville property at 607 Mine Brook Road.
5. In accordance with conditions of Planning Board approval for subdivision of the Davis property on Lyons Road, the Historic Preservation Committee arranged to remove an historic barn and also to conduct metal detection on the property.

In accordance with conditions of Board of Adjustment approval of a variance, Historic Preservation Committee members inspected the dwelling at 3 Deer Ridge Road.

In connection with a proposed subdivision of property on North Finley Avenue in Bernardsville, the arrangements have been made to remove an historic barn.

## Education

### **‘Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons’**

The 1995 pictorial history book, by Trustee June O. Kennedy, was reissued with a 15-year update as a special Bernards 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition with all proceeds donated to the Historical Society. Copies were sold throughout the year at the Brick Academy with book signings on Charter Day, Weekend Journey through the Past and the Holiday House Tour.

### **Brick Academy**

The main floor of the Brick Academy serves as a museum, the only one of its kind in the Somerset Hills, specializing in local artifacts. Visitors enjoy permanent exhibits as well as new ones installed in 2010: “*Head To Toe*,” showcases early hats and footwear; an extensive collection of pre-1920s vintage postcards; “*Kitchen Help*,” pairs a number of turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century kitchen items with their Sears Roebuck catalog descriptions; and a 1752 indenture, one of the earliest documents owned by the Historical Society, conveyed a large tract along Mine Brook Road in what is now Bernardsville. Generous donations by area residents over the years make these exhibits possible. The top floor of the Brick Academy, restored to an 1895 period schoolroom with an authentic pot belly stove, period furniture and classroom objects, is used for education programs. *Both floors are open Sundays 2-4 PM (excluding July & August)*

The lower level of the Brick Academy contains community photographs, historic preservation information, genealogy records, rare books, news articles, property deeds, local maps, and administrative files. *Open the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 10 AM to Noon and by appointment.*

### **Talks & Tours**

Over 600 students visited the Brick Academy this past year. Third grade classes from Oak Street School, Liberty Corner School and Mt. Prospect School, learned about local history and the landmark building. THSSH Educators also presented a special program for the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes of the Bedminster School System.

The Museum of Early Trades & Crafts in partnership with THSSH sponsors education programs in the restored 1890 period classroom of the Brick Academy. This year, 100 students from Liberty Corner School discovered what it was like attending a one-room schoolhouse in Colonial times. The interactive lesson also gave the children an opportunity to make a school-related craft to take home.

### **History VolunTEENS Program**

An initiative to encourage teens from the Somerset Hills area to volunteer their time and talent by assisting with THSSH programs while increasing their knowledge of local history. A group of local students served as THSSH docents at Lord Stirling 1770s Festival, Weekend Journey through the Past and the Holiday House Tour.

### **‘June in June’**

Co-sponsored with the Bernards Township Library as part of Bernards’ 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Trustee June Kennedy presented twelve never-before-seen historic artifacts (e.g. Indian relics, a 1752 land indenture, Civil War memorabilia, aviation flight suit, and vintage postcards) from THSSH collections. The program was presented several months later to the residents of Ridge Oak.

### **Newsletter**

‘*Inside the Brick Academy*’ comprises Society news, event calendar and local interest stories. Published three times per year, it is available to the general public at the Brick Academy, community events and [www.thssh.org](http://www.thssh.org).

### **THSSH Brochure**

A tri-fold pamphlet, updated annually, highlights the mission of the Historical Society, history of the Brick Academy, Board of Trustees, meeting schedules, calendar of events, and mail-in membership form. The brochure is available at the Brick Academy, at community events and in newcomer welcome baskets.

## **Walking Tours**

This past October, Trustee Paul Axt, dressed in period clothing, personally guided over thirty individual down Finley Avenue sharing human interest stories about the historic buildings. Refreshments were available near 'Bake Shop Hill' as the tour continued back to the Brick Academy where the 1890's classroom was open for visitors.

A printed self-guided Walking Tour of Historic Basking Ridge is available at the Brick Academy, at the Old Mill Inn, and on websites of the Bernards Township Library and Historical Society.

## **Lime Kilns**

The public area in Peapack-Gladstone, dedicated in 1999, provides a storyboard about the preserved kilns and the agricultural heritage of the Somerset Hills.

## Online/Internet Communications

THSSH continues to build our web capabilities as the internet remains an important tool for the overall communication efforts to provide information and virtual capabilities for visitors wanting to learn more about historic personalities, local artifacts, family genealogy, house backgrounds, and the rich history of the Somerset Hills. The website, [www.thssh.org](http://www.thssh.org), has well over a hundred pages, thousands of digital images, a mass amount of digital documents and numerous interactive flash video and slideshows. During the past year, social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter, along with the custom [www.bernards250.com](http://www.bernards250.com) website have expanded the cooperative online dialogue for our visitors. A concerted effort will continue to synchronize efforts across the various communication channels to broaden the coverage of the Historical Society's website.

## Brick Academy Utilization

In addition to our museum, research room, education programs, and community events, the Brick Academy is utilized for:

- The Historical Society conducts Board of Trustees, Membership and Committee meetings
- *The Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead* – monthly Board and annual Membership meetings
- *The Herding Group Association of New Jersey* - quarterly meetings
- *The Northern NJ Region Porsche Club of America* - monthly meetings
- *The Berkeley Circle Homeowners Association* - annual meeting

## Fund Raisers

- Gift items are sold at the Brick Academy and community events as well as displayed on the Historical Society's website at [www.thssh.org](http://www.thssh.org).
- Substantial revenue is generated through paid advertisements from local merchants and professional services in the newsletter, *Inside the Brick Academy*.
- Non-profit organizations that conduct meetings at the Brick Academy provide generous donations.
- Local school children, area residents and out-of-town visitors make individual contributions while touring the Brick Academy.
- Donations are received through *ShopforMuseums.com*, a primary source of online fundraising for museums and related non-profit organizations through three hundred popular retail stores.

• The Historical Society's sixteenth biennial Holiday House Tour was held on Sunday, December 5. Attended by nearly 500 visitors, the fundraiser included five private residences in the Somerset Hills as well as Bernards municipal building (former Astor Estate) to commemorate the Township's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Brick Academy served as the hospitality center where handmade topiaries by the Basking Ridge Garden Club, and autographed copies of '*Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons*', by Trustee June O. Kennedy, were available for purchase. Revenue generated from the Holiday House Tour will be used for ongoing restoration projects, community programs and the annual THSSH operating budget.

## Artifacts

### **Gifts and Acquisitions**

- School desk and chair. *Gift of Pat & Glen Cunningham*
- Spade used in laying the cornerstone of William Annin Junior High School, 1969. *Gift of Beverly Prochazka*

## Archives

### **Gifts and Acquisitions**

Civil War era newspapers from Connie Kearns Doughty; "Map of the Somerset Hills 1893-1939" from John Smith; Four framed prints from Wachovia Bank; Group of photos of Bedminster schoolchildren from William Rehm; Group of preservation books from Kim Hiscano; and 1752 Whitaker Deed from Richard Stevenson

### **Exhibits**

Bernards Township 1960 bicentennial exhibit in Bernardsville Library; Exhibit of Stelle Family documents in Bernards Township Public Library; Assistance provided in connection with three exhibits at the Brick Academy; and Research and documentation for exhibit of Whitaker deed

### **Bernards Township 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

Assistance provided to June Kennedy for "June in June" program; Archival information provided to Bernardsville News; Research assistance provided to Kristin Fox, Bernards Township curriculum supervisor; and Research assistance provided in connection with RHS tile mural for town hall. Assistance provided in connection with reprint of *Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons*

### **Website Inquiries**

John Annin; 1740 tax lists; Bernardsville estates; Peapack-Gladstone municipal building; Dayton family; Mary Cutting; map of Peapack; Harry Dunham Park; Moffitt Motors; Van Derbeek family; Breese family

### **Miscellaneous**

Digitization of a group of THSSH photographs by Eagle Scout Christopher Winter; Digitization of several typescripts by Caroline Margiotta, RHS; Several THSSH collections cataloged by Kevin Fox; New shelving in vault by Tom Gallagher; New bookcases installed in research room to house THSSH library; Sale of images to Wells Fargo, Foccaceria; Assistance provided in connection with RHS History Club projects; Research of purported Finley portrait; Group of photos supplied to Star Ledger; and Assistance provided to Caren Olmsted in connection with mural at KMS Farmstead

## Consultation & Clerical

Hundreds of volunteered hours were spent providing telephone and face-to-face consultation on guidance in historic preservation; reviewing and cataloguing acquisitions; photographing and digitizing old documents; cataloging our library of rare local books and archival files; and composing correspondences and publications.

## Membership

- The Historical Society welcomed ten new members in 2010.
- The Historical Society is a member of *The Somerset County Historical Society*, *League of Historical Societies of New Jersey*, *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, and *Preservation New Jersey*

## 2011 Outlook

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills will continue to pursue its mission to acquire, conserve and share artifacts and information on matters of local historic interest; cultivate interest in local history; partake in community events; encourage the preservation of local historic resources; facilitate historic research; and preserve, operate and interpret the Brick Academy. Major 2011 programs include:

### **Membership**

Upon completion of a new membership database, publish an updated Membership Directory in the spring. Plans will commence to research, organize and hold a community-wide membership drive. The Historical Society Christmas Party will be held in early December.

### **Walking Tour**

The new guided Walking Tour of historic Basking Ridge buildings with related story-telling artifacts will be further developed and offered to area residents several times during the course of the year.

### **Garden Tour**

A garden tour co-sponsored by the Historical Society and Basking Ridge Garden Club is scheduled for Friday, June 17. The fundraiser will include an impressive selection of private residences and public grounds within the Somerset Hills. The Brick Academy, headquarters of THSSH, will serve as the hospitality center.

### **Education Program**

The Historical Society will continue to expand and enhance the education program: Local history talks with area school children; 'role-play' Colonial school days with the *Museum of Early Trades & Craft*; scout troop visits; and History VolunTEENS. A promotional brochure with Education Program information and registration forms will be designed and circulated to area school districts.

### **Brick Academy**

Continue to expand the utilization of the landmark building by establishing partnerships with small museums, school districts, historic preservation committees, speaker bureaus, and community-based organizations.