

# 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

## The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

### Board of Trustees

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| John Campbell      | Holiday House Tour                              |
| June Campbell      | Museum Curator                                  |
| David Connolly     | Newsletter                                      |
| Sylvia Gambony     |   |
| Patricia Gray      |   |
| Florence Hallgring | Fund Raising                                    |
| June O. Kennedy    | Publicity, Education                            |
| Daniel Lincoln     | President, Grants                               |
| Donald Lorenz      |   |
| Robin Marion       | Museum Docents                                  |
| Marcella Miccolis  | Chairman  |
| Diane O'Connor     | Corresponding Secretary,<br>Community Relations |
| Ann Parsekian      | Historic Preservation, Grants                   |
| Joseph Ryder       | Treasurer, Building Manager                     |
| Ken Salvo          |   |
| Larry Schwenk      |   |
| Constance Smythe   |   |
| Lawrence Terricone | Recording Secretary, Landscaping                |
| Mildred Van Dyke   | Genealogy                                       |

### Executive Summary

This past year was one of transition, challenges and achievements. June Campbell submitted her resignation as Chairman of the Board of Trustees after a distinguished term of eleven years. She remains on the Board serving as Museum Curator. Resigning board members included Richard Macksoud and George Helmke – their valuable service is sincerely appreciated. The Board is pleased to welcome three new Trustees: Patricia Gray, Robin Marion and Joseph Ryder.

Restoration on the final phase of the Brick Academy preservation project has begun. A \$74,000 grant from Somerset County that was presumed to have funded the construction costs is now sufficient to fund only a portion of the project, which will cost more than \$130,000 in total. The Society has allocated \$30,000 of its own funds; is requesting special donations from THSSH members and is considering additional grant funding in order to complete the restoration project.

Other Historic Society programs include the formation of a strategic planning task force, the launch of a new interactive website, participation at the *Washington-Rochambeau Encampment* at Liberty Corner, the third annual Historic Preservation Awards, an enlightening series of speaker programs, sponsorship of the Brick Academy in the *Weekend Journey through the Past*, enhancement of educational and research programs, continual community utilization of the Brick Academy, and last but foremost honoring June Campbell at the Somerset Hills YMCA Volunteer Recognition Night.

## Strategic Planning

A special task force was formed to review the mission, goals and bylaws of the Historical Society as well as develop short-term and long-term projects for key operational areas:

- Museum/Brick Academy
- Research/Archival
- Communications
- Education
- Preservation
- Financial
- Governance

## Community Outreach

In order to provide opportunities for members of the community to gain an understanding of the activities of the Historical Society, we participate in many Somerset County, Bernards Township and history associated programs:

- **Charter Day** *May 20*  
Staffed a booth in the center of the street fair. Volunteers distributed literature; provided information and sold gift items. The Brick Academy, open for the first time, received many visitors interested in the history of the landmark building.
- **Memorial Day** *May 28*  
Participated in the annual commemoration and placed a wreath on the Town green.
- **Somerset County 4-H Fair** *August 16-18*  
Provided equestrian maps, bookmarks and informational flyers on the Brick Academy, the history of Bernards Township and the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead.
- **French Encampment** *September 16-17*  
Managed a Museum Shop at the English Farm to commemorate the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route through nine states. We distributed THSSH literature, displayed local history exhibits and sold a number of Liberty Corner pictorials, history books, local maps and children's items.
- **Weekend Journey through the Past** *October 14-15*  
The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission sponsored "Weekend Journey through the Past". Twenty-two significant historic sites were open to the public.  
  
The Brick Academy museum featured early education displays; artifacts from Lord Stirling's 18<sup>th</sup> century estate; and an antique postcard collection of Bernards Township. A guided walking tour of historic Basking Ridge village was conducted on Saturday by township historian, June Kennedy. On Sunday, museum visitors were greeted by Lord Stirling's wife, Sarah Livingston Alexander, portrayed by a character actor. The Society also participated at the Boudinot-Southard-Ross Property on North Maple Avenue, lending artifacts, providing information on the historic property and its notable owners, and exhibiting story boards prepared by June Kennedy.

- **Lord Stirling 1770's Festival** *October 1*  
 Due to inclement weather the Society's outside booth was canceled for the event.
- **Volunteer Recognition Night** *November 9*  
 The Historical Society honored June Campbell for her exceptional tenure as Chairman at the Somerset Hills YMCA Volunteer Recognition Night.
- **Artifacts** *Ongoing*  
 Local artifacts from the Society's collection are displayed at the Bernards Township municipal building, public libraries, local schools and at community events.
- **Tour Groups** *Ongoing*  
 Visitors to the Academy are invited to take a tour of the Museum, observing permanent and rotating exhibits, having the opportunity to ask questions and perusing the publications and gift items for sale. This service is provided free of charge to educators, scout troops, senior citizen groups and other community organizations.

### Brick Academy Restoration

Work on the final phase of the Brick Academy preservation project began in November. Upon completion, it will be furnished as a 19<sup>th</sup> century period classroom, which will be used for programming aimed at area school children, and will also feature exhibits on the history of education in the Somerset Hills.

Bernardsville architect Mark Alan Hewitt, who is well known for his involvement with historic projects including Craftsman Farms National Historic Landmark, was selected to prepare plans that will restore the historic appearance. Scott Ross, of Ross Construction in Gladstone, is the contractor for the project. Project manager for the Historical Society is Trustee Joseph Ryder of Basking Ridge.

A \$74,000 grant from Somerset County that was presumed to have funded the construction costs is now sufficient to fund only a portion of the project, which will cost more than \$130,000 in total. The Historical Society has allocated \$30,000 of its own funds; some of the work on the top floor will have to wait until more capital is raised. A special appeal has been made to THSSH members, many of whom have already expressed their support for the project with additional donations. However, the gap has not yet been closed and we are still exploring additional resources including our 2007 Holiday House Tour. The current preservation grant is the second grant received by the Historical Society from Somerset County, which previously helped to fund the restoration of the main floor of the Brick Academy with a grant of \$40,000.

## Speaker Program

Conducted at the General Meetings, it comprises an expert group of distinguished speakers. The programs are free, held at the Academy and are advertised to THSSH members and the general public.

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Topic</b>   | <b>Speaker</b>           |
|--------------|--|--------------------------|
| March 16     | <i>Croton Water Works – Investigating Urban Landmarks in Manhattan</i>       | Meisha Hunter            |
| April 20     | <i>Odd Couples – Franklin &amp; Eleanor Roosevelt</i>                        | George LeBoeuf           |
| May 18       | <i>Rediscovery and Inspiration along the Lewis and Clark Trail</i>           | Gordon Ward              |
| September 21 | <i>Turn Your Plate Over and Have a Good Read!</i>                            | David Cowell             |
| October 18   | <i>Ghosts on Our Doorsteps</i>   | Gordon Ward              |
| November 16  | <i>Doughnuts for Doughboys – A Salvation Army Lassie on WWI Battlefields</i> | Laurie MacDonnell-Gaulke |

## Historic Preservation

The Historic Preservation Committee, one of the Society's most interactive working groups, increases public awareness of historic preservation, promotes excellence in historic preservation and recognizes worthy historic preservation projects throughout the community.

- **Historic Preservation Awards**

On May 18 at the Brick Academy, THSSH presented the third annual Historic Preservation awards to the following properties:

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <i>82 North Finley Avenue, Basking Ridge</i>         | Preservation                |
| <i>130 South Maple Avenue, Basking Ridge</i>         | Preservation                |
| <i>201 Madisonville Road, Basking Ridge</i>          | Preservation                |
| <i>26 Olcott Avenue, Bernardsville</i>               | Preservation                |
| <i>Door Décor - 67 Minebrook Road, Bernardsville</i> | Adaptation                  |
| <i>Pluckemin Inn, Bedminster</i>                     | Compatible New Construction |

Bea Dreesen of Bernardsville, a long time passionate advocate of historic preservation, was the first recipient of the Life Achievement Award. A photography exhibit of the six Somerset Hills historic preservation projects was on public display at the Bernards Township Library in the fall.

- Serves as an advisory group to community residents as well as Zoning and Planning Board members on applications that involve historic resources.

- Establishes Historic Preservation guidelines and procedures for community members interested in residential or commercial projects, grant applications and the National Register of Historic Places.

## Education

- **Museum**

Open to the public every Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. and by appointment. Located on the main floor of the Academy, it features a self-guided tour of changing exhibits, artifacts from Lord Stirling's estate and a small gift shop. Our docents are well informed and readily available to assist visitors.

- **Research Room**

The lower level of the Academy serves as a research room and contains photographs, historic preservation information, genealogical records, rare local books, news articles, deeds and maps. Our knowledgeable members advise individuals on research projects, historic preservation procedures and grant applications. It is open to the public the first and third Wednesday of every month from 9:30 a.m. to noon and by appointment.

- **Lectures and Tours**

- During the past year, 418 local school children visited the Academy for a lecture and walking tour of historic Basking Ridge village, led by historian June Kennedy.
- Two Heritage Trail Commission buses with 90 adults visited the Academy for an afternoon lecture by historian June Kennedy.

- **History Camp**

In February, a senior Girl Scout Troop, working on its Silver Award Badge, conducted a Winter History Camp at the Academy under the guidance of historian June Kennedy. Seven scouts and two dozen younger children attended.

- **Newsletter**

'*Inside the Brick Academy*' is published three times per year: February, May and October. Mailed to our 300 members, it comprises organization news, a calendar of events, local interest stories and project updates. The newsletter is made available to the general public at our open houses, community events and on the THSSH website.

- **Early Education in Bernards Township**

A faculty member of William Annin Middle School, who is writing a book about schoolhouses in early Bernards Township, made several visits to the Academy for research material, local photographs and personal interviews.

- **Cub Scouts**

A dozen Cub Scouts working to earn their *Know Your Town* badge visited the Academy in February.

- **Walking Tour of Historic Basking Ridge Village**  
The popular guide has been included at the Visitor's Desk at The Old Mill Inn and on the Society's website as a PDF file for free download.
- **Lime Kilns**  
The public area in Peapack-Gladstone, dedicated in 1999, provides a learning story board about the preserved kilns and is an important reminder of the agricultural heritage of the Somerset Hills.
- **Road Sign**  
A new road sign was installed marking the historic hamlet of Madisonville on North Maple Avenue.

### Website

The new website of the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills was formally launched in December at the Bernards Township Library. Brooks Betz, a THSSH member and freelance webmaster, provided an informative virtual tour and discussed how the site was created, how to utilize its information, and how to participate in online community discussions.

The site, [www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org](http://www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org), includes a wealth of information on the five Somerset Hills communities: Bernards Township, Bernardsville, Bedminster, Far Hills and Peapack-Gladstone; information about the organization, activities and programs; a history of the Brick Academy; the Society's newsletters; research assistance; and information from the local history archives. It offers visitors an opportunity to join THSSH, and get involved through volunteer opportunities.

### Utilization of the Brick Academy

- The Board of Trustees convenes at the Academy the second Wednesday of each month in addition to meetings for special events.
- General Meetings of the Historical Society were held on 3/16, 4/20, 5/18, 9/21, 10/18 and 11/16. Free speaker programs were open to members and the general public.
- The Museum is open to the public every Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. and by appointment.
- The Research Room is open to the public the first and third Wednesdays of every month between 9:30 to noon and by appointment.
- The Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead held meetings at the Academy ten times during the past year: 1/14, 2/11, 4/8, 4/22, 5/13, 6/10, 9/9, 10/14, 11/11 and 12/9.
- In January, the Berkeley Circle Homeowners Association held their annual meeting at the Academy.
- During the school year, 418 local children visited the Academy for lectures and walking tours of Basking Ridge village, led by historian June Kennedy.

- Two Heritage Trail Commission buses with 90 adults visited the Academy for a Saturday afternoon lecture by historian June Kennedy.
- On February 9, a dozen Cub Scouts working to earn their *Know Your Town* badge visited the Academy.
- On February 22 & 23, a Senior Cadet Troop of Girl Scouts, working to earn a *Silver Award*, conducted a Winter History Camp for younger grade students. Forty children attended.
- The Brick Academy, open for the first time on Charter Day, received many visitors interested in the local historic landmark.
- The Research Room was utilized by a faculty member of William Annin Middle School, who is writing of a book about schoolhouses in early Bernards Township.
- On May 18, the third annual Historic Preservation Awards were presented to a substantial audience.
- On October 15 & 16, over 100 ‘travelers’ toured the Academy during the *Weekend Journey through the Past*.
- The Society’s Christmas Party was held in December, celebrating the holiday season with THSSH members from all five Somerset Hills communities.

### Fundraisers

- Gift Shop items are sold at the Academy and at community events including Charter Day and the French Encampment. The new website displays a selection of gifts and invites shoppers to visit the Academy to purchase the items.
- Paid advertisements from local merchants and professional services in our newsletter, ‘*Inside the Brick Academy*’, continue to generate substantial revenue.
- A direct mail campaign to all THSSH members requested a special donation for the top floor project. To date, over \$3,300 has been pledged in generous contributions.
- Local residents and out-of-town visitors, both adults and school children, make generous contributions to the Brick Academy Restoration Project while touring the Museum.

### Acquisitions

**Items:**

Brass stencil saying “Sold by Ellis Tiger Co., Gladstone, NJ”

Early ice pick with “Frederick Andrews, Bound Brook Ice Co., Phone 359R” on handle

Set of name plates with cow names from the Fairhaven and Bakehaven Farm, which later became Lord Stirling Stables

**Source:**

Joseph Krupsky

John Campbell

June Kennedy

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1905 Map of Bernards Township  | Herb Hilman               |
| 1937 Bernards Township Zoning Map  | Herb Hilman               |
| Partial porcelain tea set circa 1840 and a pottery pitcher<br>circa 1880 – Liberty Corner area                           | Gertrude Boyle Cross      |
| <b>Books:</b>  | <b>Source:</b>            |
| <u>Basking Ridge and Beyond</u> , by Norman Nelsen   | Dan Lincoln               |
| <u>Frontier Farmer: Autobiography and<br/>Family History of Aaron A. Boylan: 1827-1923</u> ,<br>by Katherine Lytle Sharp | Manning Lee               |
| <u>Bernards High School: 100 Years of Excellence: 1905-2005</u>  | Peter and Kathy Palmer    |
| <u>The Shooting of Rabbit Wells</u> , by William Loizeaux  | (Purchased)               |
| <u>Lesser Crossroads</u> , edited by H.G. Schmidt  | (Purchased)               |
| <u>New Jersey and the American Revolution</u> , edited by B.J. Mitnick   | (Purchased)               |
| <u>Kearny's Own, A History of the First New Jersey Brigade<br/>in the Civil War</u> , by Bradley M. Gottfried            | (Purchased)               |
| <u>Saving the Great Swamp</u> , by Cam Cavanaugh   | (Purchased)               |
| <u>The Governors of N.J. 1664-1974</u> ,<br>edited by Paul Stellhorn and Michael Birkner                                 | (Purchased)               |
| <u>Somerset Hills Country Club 1899-1999</u> , edited by Adele Nelson  | (Purchased)               |
| <u>Among the Blue Hills</u>  | Robert and Peggy Beringer |
| <u>Historic Roadsides</u>  | Robert and Peggy Beringer |

### Consultation & Clerical Work

As in the previous year, we spent over 300 hours providing telephone and face-to-face consultation to the public on genealogy and guidance in historic preservation; reviewing and cataloguing acquisitions; photographing privately held old documents; cataloging our library of rare local books and archival files; and composing pamphlets and publications; and maintaining the building.

### Landscaping

The Historical Society has instituted a new continual landscaping program of perennial plants, seasonal flowers and holiday greens, in conjunction with the Basking Ridge Garden Club.

## Association Memberships

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills is a member of the following organizations:

1. *Somerset County Historical Society*
2. *League of Historical Societies of New Jersey*
3. *National Trust for Historic Preservation*
4. *Preservation New Jersey*

## 2007 Outlook

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills will continue 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 programs for 2007 include:

- **Strategic Planning**
  - Present the revised proposed Bylaws at the General Meeting in March for membership approval.
  - Select recommendations of the Strategic Planning Task Force to develop short and long-term projects in the area of: Museum/Brick Academy, Research/Archival, Communications, Education, Preservation, Financial and Governance.
- **Third Floor Project**
  - Complete construction work on Phase One: ceiling, walls and entry hall.
  - Continue to solicit donations and prepare a Somerset County grant application for Phase Two: floor and final finishes.
- **Membership**
  - Publish a new Membership Directory, containing pertinent Historical Society information and member contact listings.
  - Initiate the planning process for a major Membership Drive.
- **Holiday House Tour**

THSSH will sponsor the 15<sup>th</sup> Holiday House Tour on Sunday, December 2. Attended by an expected 500 visitors, it features 5-6 diverse and architecturally significant homes in the Somerset Hills. Revenue generated from the biannual fundraiser will be used primarily for the Top Floor Restoration Project and 2007 operating budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella A. Miccolis  
Chairman – Board of Trustees