

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

Submitted by Marcella A. Miccolis, Chairman

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The Board of Trustees presently comprises 16 members and convened ten times in 2013. There were five general membership meetings which include business updates, event announcements and guest speakers. A new Treasurer, Gregory Gonzales, was appointed in November.

Executive Summary

2013 was a milestone year for The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills and as in the many previous years proved to be a most productive one. Highlights include:

- Founded on September 23, 1928, The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (originally the Basking Ridge Historical Society) celebrated its 85th anniversary!
- The Museum Committee participated with other local historical organizations for an art gallery exhibition at the Administration Office to honor the 325th Anniversary of Somerset County.
- *How Children Played!* was introduced as a new education program that explores how early American handcrafted toys taught adult lessons learned at play.
- Speaker Programs were enhanced with prominent guest lecturers through our membership in the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.
- The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills and the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee of Bernardsville received grants from the 2013 Somerset County Historic Preservation Award Program.
- The 17th Holiday House Tour was held on Sunday, December 15. Attended by over 400 visitors, the highly successful fundraiser featured five private residences and the Brick Academy.

Detailed in the following report are Community Outreach; Brick Academy Museum; Education; Speaker Programs; Membership; Historic Preservation; THSSH Online; Fund Raisers; Brick Academy Utilization; and Consultation & Clerical.

Community Outreach

In order to provide opportunities for the community to gain an understanding of our mission and to raise consciousness of the historical heritage of the Somerset Hills, the organization participates in many Somerset County and Somerset Hills history-related events such as Charter Day; Memorial Day Parade; Lord Stirling 1770s Festival; and Weekend Journey through the Past. In addition:

- Historic artifacts from THSSH collections are displayed at municipal buildings, neighborhood libraries, local schools, and community events.
- *Free* lectures and tours are provided to educators, scout troops, senior citizens, and other non-profit groups.

Brick Academy Museum

The main floor of the Brick Academy serves as a museum of local artifacts, the only one of its kind in the Somerset Hills. The top floor restored to a 1890s period schoolroom with an authentic pot belly stove, period furniture and classroom objects, is used for education programs.

Exhibits & Displays:

- A display of antique "Make-Dos" was placed in the museum, with a sister display installed at the Bernards Township Library.
- The Museum Committee provided posters of Historical Politicians for an exhibit in May to honor the 325th Anniversary of Somerset County. Among the artifacts were portraits of Theodore Frelinghuysen, who served as a U.S. Senator, N.J. Attorney General and Mayor of Newark, as well as fellow statesman, Samuel Lewis Southard.

Projects:

- The Clay/Frelinghuysen Currier & Ives print was reframed with a sympathetic frame.
- Installed glass display shelves for local artifacts in the window wells on the ground level of the Brick Academy.
- Implemented an electronic artifact cataloging system.
- Worked with two interns from Drew University to assist with our Archives and Collections Management project.

Acquisitions:

- Signed letter from Lord Stirling dated 1775 was donated by Richard Blauvelt; now on display in the Lord Stirling case
- Diorama of the William Annin Farmstead from the English family
- A framed, handwritten deed dated 1799, conveying a large plot of Bernards Township land was donated to THSSH by Arthur Thomas Lewis III of Middlebury, Vermont. The property of one Gavin McCoy was conveyed to one Thomas Lewis.

Memberships:

Small Museum Association

Education

The Education Committee comprises three retired certified New Jersey teachers and a former Girl Scout Leader with guidance from the Society's Historian.

- Students from the five elementary schools in Bernards Township visit the Brick Academy for an education program. This year over 400 children participated in programs staffed either by THSSH committee members or by *Museum of Early Trades and Crafts* teachers.
- Our education programs have young visitors 'role play' what it is like to be a student in 1850 at the Brick Academy. *How Children Played!* was introduced as a new education program that explores how early American handcrafted toys taught adult lessons learned at play.
- In addition to our education programs, some class trips take a walking tour of Basking Ridge village given by their teachers who we have trained by our educators in local stories of historic interest.
- Scout troops from the Somerset area continue to visit the Brick Academy as part of their merit badge programs.
- 'Craft Sunday' has proven to be an enriching THSSH education program to engage local children in learning about history by creating early American crafts. This year's programs include 'Lenape Tee Shirts' and 'Coats of Arms.'
- We partnered with Trilogy Repertory Company to display a School Teacher mannequin, in full period costume and wig, in the 1890s Schoolroom.
- On Charter Day, Education Committee members served as docents in the top floor classroom to create an authentic 1890s experience for visitors.
- A historic Walking Tour of Basking Ridge village was conducted for families in the fall.
- In November, June Kennedy, the Society's Historian, lectured Spring Ridge residents about Bernards Township history.

Other educated-related programs include:

Walking Tours

A printed self-guided *Walking Tour of Historic Basking Ridge Village* is available at the Brick Academy and as a free download on the Bernards Township Library and Historical Society websites.

History VolunTEENS

An initiative to encourage teens from the Somerset Hills to volunteer their time and talent by assisting with THSSH programs while increasing their knowledge of local history.

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.

'Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons'

The pictorial history book, by Trustee June O. Kennedy, reissued with a 15-year update as a limited Bernards 250th anniversary edition, continues to sell at the Brick Academy and community events.

THSSH Brochure

Available at the Brick Academy and community events, a free brochure includes the Society's mission, history of the Brick Academy, projects and fundraisers, and membership information.

Lime Kilns

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

Speaker Programs

Conducted at General Membership Meetings, distinguished speakers lecture on a broad range of historical subjects. The programs are *free*, held at the Brick Academy and are advertised to THSSH members and the general public. This past year included:

February	Mike Duncan	<i>A Night with the Founding Fathers</i>
March	Margaret Westfield	<i>Dating Historic Buildings</i>
September	Monica Hoffman	<i>Determined Spirit: The Story of Amelia Earhart</i>
October	Daniel Campbell	<i>Early American Jewelry</i>
November	David Sperling	<i>18th Century Clockmaking in New Jersey</i>

Membership

- The Historical Society welcomed four new members in this past year.
- Nearly 100 THSSH members and community friends volunteered their time for the 2013 Holiday Tour as house docents, car parkers and cookie bakers.
- 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*

Historic Preservation

- The Somerset Hills area received two grants from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission's 2013 Historic Preservation award program: The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills received \$37,600 (funds will be used to replace the existing wood shake roof at the Brick Academy) and the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee of Bernardsville received \$249,806 (funds will be used at the historic Dunster Squibb House primarily for roof and gutter replacements, chimney reconstruction, and window repairs). Both grant applications were prepared by Trustees Dan Lincoln and Paula Axt.
- THSSH Executive Committee continued discussions with the Peapack-Glastone Historic Preservation Committee regarding ownership and preservation of the local lime kilns.

THSSH.org Online

Our primary traditional website contains information about the Historical Society, the Brick Academy, events calendar, historic districts and landmarks, *Inside the Brick Academy* newsletter, archives, photographs, and special announcements. Popular searches continue to be Blairsden, Charter Day, archives, local history events, and images of historic landmarks.

In addition, social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and dedicated history blogs continue to provide information regarding history in the Somerset Hills and the Historical Society.

Fund Raisers

- Gift items are sold at the Brick Academy and community events as well as displayed on the Historical Society's website: *www.thssh.org*.
- Substantial revenue is generated through paid advertisements from local merchants and professional services in our newsletter, *Inside the Brick Academy*.
- Non-profit organizations that conduct meetings at the Brick Academy provide a contribution.
- School children, area residents and out-of-town visitors make generous donations at the Brick Academy.
- Brick Academy notecards are sold at the Bernards Township Library.
- Donations are received through *ShopforMuseums.com*, a primary source of online fundraising for museums and related non-profit organizations through three hundred participating retail stores.
- *Holiday House Tour in the Somerset Hills* is conducted biennially with proceeds benefitting our museum exhibits, public lectures, educational programs, and operating expenses at the Brick Academy.

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 regular Board of Trustees, Membership and Committee 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
- *The Guard Pipes and Drums* - weekly meeting
- *Antique Guild* - periodically
- *AAUW* - periodically

Consultation & Clerical

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

2014 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.

- Museum Committee will install a permanent exhibit at the Brick Academy that showcases the Somerset Hills including Bedminster; Peapack-Gladstone; Far Hills; Bernardsville and Bernards Township. Through art, artifacts, maps, photos, posters, memorabilia and written details, it will tell a compelling story about the area from its beginnings to the present day.
- The Historical Society will network with The Women's Association of Morristown Medical Center and the Blairsdon estate homeowner for *Mansion in May* and future mutual interests.
- In addition to our Bernards Township elementary school program, the Education Committee plans to further develop 'Craft Sunday' and Scout Troop visits to the Brick Academy.

- The Historical Society will consult with the management of the future Washington Inn restaurant to provide vintage photographs and memorabilia of historic Basking Ridge village.
- A full agenda of speaker programs is scheduled with an exclusive presentation in May on the Blairsdon estate by W. Barry Thomson, local historian.
- A Summer Social will be held at the Brick Academy to honor long-standing members of the Historical Society.
- An online 'email blast' will be created to notify our internal list of members and museum visitors about upcoming events and special announcements.
- The Historic Preservation grant of \$37,600 from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission will be used to replace the existing wood shake roof at the Brick Academy.