

inside THE BRICK ACADEMY

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE SOMERSET HILLS

SEPTEMBER 2007



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Speaker Series

'Fiddlesticks'

Thursday, September 20

Nancy Shill and **Charlie Pellegrino** are lovers of music and of history. They play music and sing songs from various eras in full regalia. For their Colonial/Revolutionary War program which reflects such a rich period from this area's past, they will sing such standards as *The Girl I left Behind Me* and *Yankee Doodle*. "One song can frequently teach you a new perspective about the times and the people" says Nancy.

"A Bit of Earth"

Thursday, October 18

This enjoyable workshop includes exemplary readings and photos from **Gordon Thomas Ward's** book *A Bit of Earth: Preserving Childhood, History, and a Sense of Place*, tips about gathering regional information, instruction on generating ideas through "creative clustering," and guidance for individuals to develop and outline their own stories within suggested categories. Attendees need to bring lined paper, blank paper, a pen, and perhaps a few photos, with which they will design a personalized blueprint for documentation.

'Quilts in American History'

Thursday, November 15

Julie Brown Neu has been quilting for ten years, focusing primarily on traditional patchwork. She is a member of the Garden State Quilters Guild, for which she manages charitable activities. Julie also has been the Hanging Chair for the guild's previous two quilt shows. She has demonstrated hand quilting techniques at the Chatham Township Bicentennial fair and at the Fosterfields Living Historical Farm in Morristown.

*Programs are free • 7:30 pm at the Brick Academy • Refreshments
Family & Friends welcomed!*

Brooks Betz

Elected to Board of Trustees



The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills is pleased to welcome Brooks Betz as a new member of the Board of Trustees. Brooks is an Information Technology professional with significant experience developing Quality and software quality delivery programs for corporations, project managing complex initiatives and developing strategies where leverage of outsourcing plays a role. Before working with Performance Ridge, he worked at Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan, and Deutsche Bank. Prior to his career in IT, Brooks spent years on the business/client-side for a number of financial institutions including Bankers Trust Company, Chase Manhattan Bank, and NYFX. Brooks graduated from Bryant University (Rhode Island) in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Management and Finance.

Brooks and his wife Jill moved to Basking Ridge in August 2003 from Springfield, New Jersey. Growing up in Westfield and a 1980 graduate of Westfield High School, his family was active in historical endeavors while owning the Cranford Canoe Club in Cranford, New Jersey, one of the oldest and historic canoe livery operations in the United States. The Betzes have three children, Hunter, Samantha, and Rachel.

Brooks has been instrumental in the development, launch and maintenance of THSSH's website, www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org. On his involvement with the Historical Society he notes, "For anyone that moves to a new area and wants to feel like a local, the first thing to do is to think like a local by understanding the local history. That's why I applaud the efforts of THSSH and love supporting their efforts."

Fourth Annual Historic Preservation Awards



Having outgrown the capacity of the Brick Academy, THSSH's fourth annual Historic Preservation Awards were presented in May at the Bernardsville Public Library. The popular event was co-hosted this year by the Bernardsville Historic Preservation Advisory Committee.

After introductions by BHPAC Chair Phil Kennedy-Grant, THSSH member David Becker presented a slide show of the honored projects that he created with his daughter Hannah, while THSSH Chair Marcella Miccolis presented the awards for five area projects and one special award for overall achievement.

Winning awards for projects this year were Gary and Annemarie Frendak (249 Madisonville Rd., Basking Ridge); Greg and Ingrid Cordasco (Liberty Cycle, Basking Ridge); Charles and Nan Romano (Nan Romano, Bedminster); Sandra and John McDonald (Sandra John, Basking Ridge); and the Cemetery Heritage Committee of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church. Cited for special recognition in the area of overall achievement was the Hampshire Companies of Morristown, for preservation of the Old Library and the Station Pub in Bernardsville, and for compatible new construction of Base Camp in Basking Ridge.



Photos of all winning projects will be on display this fall at the Bernards Township Public Library and can be viewed online at www.brickacademy.org.

left: Gary and Annemarie Frendak did an impressive job rescuing this early 19th century house in Madisonville.

Somerset County's Weekend Journey through the Past



October 13 & 14

Sunday 10/14 • 1pm

The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, in conjunction with local historical organizations, has designated the weekend of October 13-14, "*Weekend Journey through the Past.*" Twenty-five of the County's historic sites will be open from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday and Noon to 5:00 pm on Sunday. Many of the sites will offer special exhibits, programs, and tours. Admission and parking at each site are *free*.

THSSH is sponsoring the Brick Academy located at 15 West Oak Street, Basking Ridge. The museum will feature Bernards Township history boards, early education displays, artifacts from Lord Stirling's 18th century plantation, Allen and Stelle family memorabilia, and a salute to local post offices.

Special events include:

Saturday 10/13 • 1 pm

"Forging Ahead in the Somerset Hills: Archaeological Investigations at the Leddell/Frost Forge Site, an 18th-Century Ironworks in Bernardsville, New Jersey" by Richard Veit, PhD, Monmouth University, Department of History and Anthropology

This presentation discusses a recent archaeological study of the Leddell/Frost Forge, an 18th-century bloomery forge in Bernardsville, Somerset County, New Jersey. The site is an archaeological treasure, containing exceptionally well preserved wooden remains which provide new information about forge layout and construction. The presentation examines the forge and what it and similar sites can tell us about early American industries, the entrepreneurs who owned them, and the people who labored in them.

A guided *Walking Tour* through the picturesque village of Basking Ridge. Sightseers will discover over 250 years of local history. The earliest structures date back to when the name "Baskenridge" first appeared in the records of the Presbyterian Church in 1733. Many of the buildings on the tour were initially erected as private residences and are based on traditional "vernacular" architectural forms while others are impressive examples of formal architectural styles. Highlights of the tour include the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church and "Old Yard" cemetery, the hat shop of Aunt Carrie Cross considered to be the oldest building in the village, the grand manor of Dr. Horatio G. Whitnall who served as the Chief Surgeon of the Union Army and many additional sites of historical significance.

Two other Bernards Township landmarks will be participating in the October 13-14 event: The ***Boudinot-Southard-Ross*** property on North Maple Avenue will host many activities by local organizations including Trilogy Theater's dramatic representations, a Bernards Township Library exhibit, kite flying, a Paint Out!, and Flag Man's landscape of American flags. The ***Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead*** on King George Road will sponsor *plein air* ("open air") painting (Sat & Sun from Dawn to 5 P.M.), family scavenger hunts, and farmstead art creations for young visitors.

For further information, please call The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission at 908-231-7110 or visit the event website at www.schistoryweekend.com.

From The Archives

Recently, long time THSSH trustee Mildred Van Dyke found a little spare time to go through some of her files and dug up a number of nice old photos that she has generously donated to the archives. Millie grew up spending summers in Basking Ridge before moving here full time, and so has been witness to over eight decades of changes around the area. Several of the photos depict buildings that were familiar landmarks fifty or sixty years ago, while others show locals people and scenes of daily life during the war years.

This photograph shows the house of Revolutionary War Patriot, Col. Israel Rickey, which stood across the street from the Basking Ridge Country Club. During the construction of the AT&T complex in the mid 1970s, the house was moved to Harding Township, taking a well-publicized highway trip on Interstate 287 to avoid the narrow bridge crossing at Osborne Pond.



Donations of Somerset Hills photographs and memorabilia are always appreciated. Photo and manuscript archives are maintained in the old walk-in vault at the Brick Academy, and over the last few years, volunteers have upgraded the archival protection of these collections. Plans for the archives include digitization of photos and documents for web viewing. Visit www.brickacademy.org to see some that are already online!

The Research Center is open every first and third Wednesday, from 9:30 to Noon or by appointment.



History Events

◆ On **October 11, 1794**, Mary Lewis Kinnan (1764-1848) returned to Basking Ridge, after three years and five months as a captive of the Shawnee Indians. She was rescued by her brother, Jacob Lewis, who traced her location from a letter received from her sister. Jacob received funds for his rescue mission from the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church congregation, and traced his sister from Ohio to Detroit, Michigan. Mary Kinnan, dressed in men's clothing, walked away from the Indian camp with her brother onto a river raft which took them on their journey back to Basking Ridge. She lived to age 84 and her tombstone can be seen from the North Finley Avenue side of the Presbyterian Church, next to her son, Joseph.

◆ On **October 13, 1974**, when the new Bernards Township Library was completed in Basking Ridge, residents, friends, and organizations formed a human book brigade, moving all the books on a Sunday afternoon from the old library at 2 North Finley Avenue to the new library at 32 South Maple Avenue. The New York Times reported the event!

◆ On **October 19, 1781**, British General Charles Cornwallis surrendered to General George Washington at Yorktown, VA, formally ending the American Revolution. French troops commanded by Comte de Rochambeau had camped overnight in Liberty Corner, Bernards Township August 30 en route to the march south and final victory!



[Cornwallis surrenders to Washington at Yorktown.](#)

Sunday “Open House”

Hours Resume

Sunday, September 9 begins “Open House” visiting hours from 2 – 4 P.M. at the Brick Academy. Visitors are now treated to a completely restored main meeting room level with new and changing exhibits.

On view presently are displays on the early school days and former students of the Brick Academy and School District #12; the life of Lord Stirling; a salute to area post offices – all with accompanying artifacts and photographs.

The Academy’s Research Center is located in the lower level and is open every first and third Wednesday of the month from **9:30 A.M. to 12 Noon**. The building’s top floor restoration is not completed yet, but will eventually be a prototype of an early 20th Century schoolroom.

Lord Stirling 1770s Festival

October 7th

Circle the date – October 7th – and join the crowds attending the annual Lord Stirling 1770s Festival, where life in the 18th Century will be portrayed and craftspeople will demonstrate the various occupations and products of the time.

The program, sponsored by the Somerset County Park Commission, is held on the grounds of Stirling Manor, known affectionately by neighbors of the era, as The Buildings, manor estate of William Stirling, Lord Stirling, the colorful Revolutionary War general and good friend of General George Washington.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills will again staff a booth, displaying educational materials and artifacts, maps and other related objects of the time.

The event is from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

ENGLISH FAMILY TO HOST “HISTORY DAY”

The English family of Liberty Corner again will host a History Day in late September at their Valley Road farm. On view for the public will be the various farm buildings, livestock, vintage agricultural equipment and other exhibits. Hours will be from 12 Noon to 5 P.M.

Visitors and guests are welcome to view this farm property which has been in operation continuously for eight generations. It was on this site that the French troops of Comte de Rochambeau encamped August 30, 1781 overnight en route to join the American forces of General George Washington, culminating in the surrender of General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown, VA. Several historic groups have been invited to participate at History Day. Further details will be announced in local media.



Holiday House Tour December 2



Six Homes & Academy to Receive Visitors

Six distinctive homes in the Somerset Hills will be open for “tour-ists” at the bi-annual Holiday House Tour of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, scheduled for Sunday, December 2. The properties range in age from the 1820s through the mid-20th Century and feature a variety of styles.

A Victorian Christmas tree will be among the decorations at the 1809 Brick Academy, which will serve as the hospitality center. **Tour hours are 12 Noon to 5 P.M.**

Visitors are reminded to purchase their tour tickets when they become available in mid-October. The house tour’s aim is to restore a sense of history. Those who come to enjoy the house tour, will have refreshments along the way, and appreciate selected merchandise and crafts in local shops and the flavor of the holidays in the country. A pleasant trip from the city, it is a day’s escape to earlier, simpler times.

Tour tickets of \$25.00 will be available after October 15 by calling (908) 221-1770. **Volunteers are needed!** For cookie bakers, please contact Robin Marion at (908) 766-7145; for house docents and car parkers, call June Campbell at (908) 647-2241.

Historical Society Observes 79th Birthday

September 23, 2007 marks the 79th anniversary of the founding of the Basking Ridge Historical Society, forerunner of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills.

◆ In 1928, a group of Bernards Township residents met in the Maple Avenue School (site of the present Bernards Township Library) and organized for the purpose of studying and preserving local history. Programs were in the school, members' homes, the library at 2 North Finley Avenue, and later in Town Hall, which was then located in the Brick Academy.

◆ In 1975, the municipal offices were relocated to Collyer Lane and the Academy became the headquarters of THSSH. The Society leases the landmark building from the Township.

◆ In 1988, in an effort to broaden its horizon, the organization's name was changed to The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills.

◆ In 1990, a new 50-year lease between the Society and Bernards Township was written for the Society's continuous use of the Brick Academy. The Historical Society "shall have exclusive use of the premises and shall endeavor to restore, renovate and preserve the building, in view of its historical significance."

All Somerset Hills residents and non-residents are invited to become members of the Historical Society.

Museum Gift Shop

Looking for a little gift – housewarming, birthday, anniversary or holiday stocking stuffer? Visit the Brick Academy. On hand are vintage postcards, township map reprints, note cards, local area booklets, history coloring books, stained glass sun-catchers, "Rules for Students", KMS Farmstead art prints, and watercolor pictorials of Basking Ridge & Liberty Corner by local artist Linda Arnold. Museum hours: Sundays 2 to 4 pm (except summer and holidays) or call 908-221-1770.

2008 Membership Dues

Renewal envelopes have been mailed to THSSH members. **Please remit your membership dues for next year by October 31, 2007.**

Annual dues provide revenue for our programs, restoration of the Brick Academy and publications. Members enjoy exclusive privileges, including invitations to special events, *Inside the Brick Academy* newsletter, museum exhibits, research and library facilities and a Membership Directory.

Welcome New Members

*Alexander Marcus
Donald Hill, Carolyn Ross & Nancy Hill*

Thank You!

Larry Schwenk, former member of the Board of Trustees, for your generous contribution to the Top Floor Restoration Project.

General Election Briefs

October 16 is the last day to apply by mail for an Absentee Ballot for the General Election on November 6, 2007. Deadline for the County to receive an Absentee Ballot Application:

- By mail is October 30
- In person is November 5 at 3 P.M.

Polling places will be open throughout Somerset County from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. To apply, call the County Board of Elections at (908) 231-7084. Check the front of your sample ballot to find your polling location.