

# *Inside* THE BRICK ACADEMY

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

September 2009



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## Speaker Series

### Early American Schoolhouse

*Thursday, September 17*

Discover what it was like to be a student attending a one-room schoolhouse in Colonial times. The school supplies then not only included slates and books, but also buckets and logs! Participants will have the opportunity to share memories of their own early school experiences. Program by **Meg Wastie**, Education Coordinator of the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts.

### 'Ghosts of Central Jersey: Historic Haunts of the Somerset Hills'

*Thursday, October 15*

What ghosts roam within the historic sites and buildings of Central NJ? How accurate are the traditional stories? From his new book, local author **Gordon Ward** transports us from the shadowed woods of the Somerset Hills to the dappled banks of the Delaware River to deliver a rich mix of factual history and the sound investigation of ghostly phenomena.

### 'The Uncertain Revolution: Washington and the Continental Army at Morristown'

*Thursday, November 19*

New Jersey's esteemed historian **John T. Cunningham** explores the harsh circumstances and geography of this region during the War of Independence. This "geological fortress", Washington and the Continental Army's winter quarters for four years, may well be the place where America survived.

*Programs start at 7:30 PM*

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The Brick Academy • 15 West Oak Street • Basking Ridge  
*Free Admission • Refreshments*

# Mark Your Calendar...

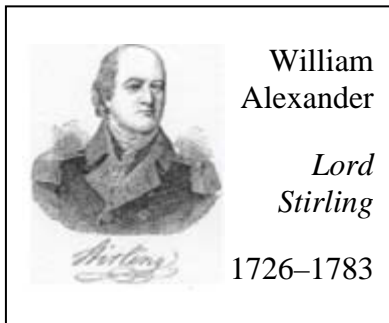


## Lord Stirling 1770s Festival October 4

Colonial history lives at the 1770s Festival held from 10 AM to 4 PM at Lord Stirling Park in Basking Ridge.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills will staff a fair booth, displaying educational materials, local artifacts and historic maps.

During the annual event, nearly 50 colonial craftspeople attired in period dress demonstrate their trades and crafts (*not for sale*), and a Revolutionary War military detachment conducts maneuvers on the site of the former manor house.



The Somerset County Park Commission's event promotes historical and environmental education by highlighting William 'Lord Stirling' Alexander, demonstrating the colonial heritage of New Jersey, and recreating a typical Sunday afternoon in 1770.

## Brick Academy 'Open House'

Sunday, September 6 begins 'Open House' hours from 2 – 4 PM at the Brick Academy. Residents of Bernards Township and neighboring communities are invited to visit the 1809 Federal-style schoolhouse. On view presently are:

- Brick Academy 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Timeline
- Early Bernards Township General Stores
- Hooray for Hats!
- The Annin Homestead, Liberty Corner
- A Collection of Foot Warmers
- Kitchen Tools of Long Ago
- Memorabilia of Lord Stirling's Manor House
- Brick Academy Restoration Artifacts

The top floor has been restored to an 1895 period schoolroom with an authentic pot belly stove, student desks, old books and all! *Note: The research center is located on the lower level and is open every first and third Wednesday of the month from 9:30 AM to 12 Noon and by appointment.*

## Weekend Journey through the Past October 10 & 11

The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, in conjunction with local historical organizations, has designated the weekend of October 10 & 11, '*Weekend Journey through the Past*'. Twenty-seven of the County's significant historic sites will be open on Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and on Sunday from 12:00 Noon to 5:00 PM. Many of the sites have planned special exhibits, programs, and tours. *Admission and parking are free!*

THSSH is pleased to sponsor the Brick Academy located at 15 West Oak Street in Basking Ridge. The main floor will feature a 15-foot timeline to celebrate the landmark building's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year; interesting artifacts from Brick Academy restoration projects; and themed museum exhibits. The 1895 period schoolroom on the top floor will have early education activities for young visitors. A self-guided tour of historic Basking Ridge village will be available for walking enthusiasts.

For further event information, call the SCC&HC at 908-231-7110 or visit the event website at [www.schistoryweekend.com](http://www.schistoryweekend.com).

# 200 YEARS OF HISTORY ON VIEW AT THE BRICK ACADEMY

By June O. Kennedy

There's something new and exciting on view at the Brick Academy! To celebrate the landmark building's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, 1809 -2009, a 15-foot timeline has been created and installed on three walls (center section shown below) of the main meeting room.

The timeline actually begins in 1795 with the arrival of Dr. Robert Finley, who assumed the vacant pastorship of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church upon the death of Dr. Samuel Kennedy.



Dr. Kennedy had established the Basking Ridge Classical School many years earlier, having conducted it on his plantation on King George Road, and later relocating it adjacent to the church. Dr. Finley increased the enrollment to a point where space desperately was needed, and a new structure was built at the present location on West Oak Street in 1809.

The Brick Academy has over its history been used as a boys' private school, a public school, two union halls and the Bernards Township's Municipal Building until 1975. Currently, it is leased from the local government and following a concerted restoration program serves as

headquarters of THSSH, a local history museum and research center. The top floor replicates an 1895 one-room classroom for educational programming.

The timeline has 67 individual dates and 48 graphics which illustrate changes in the community, new schools, transportation events, activities within the two Bernards villages, and America's involvement in national and international conflicts. The '200 Years of History' exhibit, a joint effort of Trustee June Kennedy and THSSH Archivist Ann Parsekian, will remain on display through the end of 2009.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

It's that time of year again... THSSH is kicking off its 2010 **Membership Renewal Drive!**

Annual dues provide revenue for our speaker programs, museum exhibits, special publications, and operating expenses of the Brick Academy.

Renewal envelopes have been mailed to members. Please remit your 2010 membership dues by **October 31, 2009**. We also ask Life Members to kindly consider making a contribution as well.

*Thank You!*

*We appreciate your support of the Historical Society*

## FIRST IN AMERICA...FROM NEW JERSEY!

By June O. Kennedy

The following businesses and products originated in New Jersey:

Arlington	Steam Engine	1753
Burlington	Chinaware	1685
Camden	Condensed soup	1897
Hoboken	Brewery	1642
Jamesburg	Canned tomatoes packed	1847
Menlo Park	Incandescent lamp	1879
Morristown	Successful telegraph tested	1837
Murray Hill	Transistor	1948
Newark	Malleable iron	1826
Newark	Patent leather made	1818
Newark	Successful plastic factory	1873
Paterson	Planned industrial city	1791
Paterson	Silk factory	1838
Paterson	Submarine made	1878
Paterson	Revolving pistol	1836
Pompton Plains	Rocket engines	WWII
Salem County	Successful glass factory	1739
Trenton	Iron beams for buildings	1854
Trenton	Railroad suspension bridge	1855
Trenton	American-made china in White House	1917
Vineland	Thermos bottle	1880s
West Orange	Phonograph played	1887
West Orange	Motion pictures	1889

## Friends of the KMS Farmstead Thank THSSH for Grant

We, Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead (Friends), are honored to have received a grant of \$2,000 from the Historical Society of Somerset Hills, the first grant ever awarded by THSSH. We are a 501C3 not for profit group, organized in 2004 as successors to the Kennedy Farmstead Task Force that had been appointed by Bernards Township in 2001. We lease this secluded four acre tract on the banks of the Passaic River and its four 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings from Bernards Township. It is our responsibility to preserve the buildings and to operate the Farmstead to provide historical education and as a center for the arts for the benefit of the public. The generous THSSH grant provides much needed financial support for this effort.

This important historical landmark is now listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. Since Nathaniel Rolfe first homesteaded the land in 1740 it was continuously farmed until 1999. Progressing down its 1000 foot access lane at 450 King George Road past its 18<sup>th</sup> Century barns to the Farm House on the bank of the Passaic River is a step back in time evocative of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century life when farms like this formed the basis for local culture. Rolfe built the first part of the Farm House in 1750. Rev. Samuel Kennedy, who was the fourth pastor of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, lived here from 1760 until 1768 and on this property established a classical school which prepared young men to attend Kings College (Princeton University). This school moved several times, finally in 1809 to the Brick Academy in Basking Ridge. Colonel Ephraim Martin, who lived on the farm from 1768 to 1794, was a Revolutionary War patriot who served under General, Lord Stirling, and was wounded in the battles of Long Island and Monmouth. While living in the Farm House he was elected to the newly created State Legislature and thus became a Founding Father of the state of New Jersey. Catherine Stelle, Colonel Martin's third wife, acquired the property in 1794 and her descendents lived on the Farmstead until the 1940's.

Tremendous amounts of work accomplished during the past eight years resulted from a wide spectrum of forces: preservation grants from the Somerset County Historic Preservation Trust & the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund, financial support from Bernards Township, advisory and administrative support from the Township's engineering staff, pro bono help from many local businesses, and diverse participation by 110 volunteers.

These volunteers, many of whom are members of THSSH, have accomplished important tasks ranging from heavy and dirty (using sledge hammers to remove a 20<sup>th</sup> century shower stall, repairing the Cow Shed roof, and cleaning the basement), to intellectual (creating a first rate web site, and writing grant applications), to social and educational (greeting the public and conducting tours of the property), to exciting (while removing 20<sup>th</sup> century wallpaper, wallboard and paneling in the Farm House, volunteers found two previously unknown doors between rooms and a stairway from the kitchen to the second floor that had been boxed in to form closets).

To date the exterior of the big English Barn has been completely preserved, and the collapsing Dairy Barn has been removed. The Wagon House and Cow Shed have been shored up with support beams. Extensive progress has been made in preserving the Farm House with major accomplishments that include: foundation repaired, vinyl siding removed and clapboard repaired and painted, a new cedar-shingle roof installed, new electrical, heating and air conditioning systems installed, and a French drain and sump pump system installed in the basement. More Farm House work is currently underway to repair and insulate windows and to repair plaster. This April we applied to Somerset County for funds to complete work on the Farm House – refurbish two bathrooms, paint the interior, install a new galley-kitchen and build an exterior access ramp to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

If this grant is awarded we will complete work on Farm House so two arts organizations can begin using the building. The Eastern Conservatory of Music and Art will use the first and second floors to expand its operations from its current location in Lamington, N.J. The non-profit Conservatory's instructors, including those from Julliard and Peabody conservatories, will provide music lessons for individuals and chamber music ensembles and present performances by professional musicians for the education of students and the enjoyment of the general public. The well established Raritan Valley Art Association plans to make the Farmstead a permanent home for its 100 members. The Friends are continuing discussions with other established local arts organizations and practitioners about providing a variety of arts programs at the Farmstead.

In October the Farmstead will once again participate in the Somerset County "Weekend Journey Through the Past," and in 2010 will help celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bernards Township with historical and arts events at the Farmstead. For more insights into the Farmstead go to our web site, [www.kmsfarmstead.org](http://www.kmsfarmstead.org). If you want to take a tour, or to find out how you can help, call John Campbell on 908 647-2241. And thanks again to THSSH for its generous grant and the continuing involvement of many of its members in this exciting project.

*John Campbell, President* – Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead

# Historic Businesses in the Somerset Hills

By Brooks Betz

The Somerset Hills, one of the most prestigious and historic areas in New Jersey, has provided commercial opportunities for centuries. The following is a list of the "Top Ten Historic Businesses". Local historians, business owners, and the area chambers of commerce were contacted and the ranking was based on a number of criteria including longevity, community involvement, and historic significance.

- 1. Willies Tavern** - Bedminster (Tavern) The building was erected in 1780 by Aaron Melick for his son, John, who was returning home from the Revolutionary War. It has served as a pub, polling place, pool room, package store, political forum, speakeasy, hotel and restaurant.
- 2. English Farm** - Liberty Corner (Active Farmstead) Since 1740. Can you say eight generations? A continuously working farm in the same spot where Revolutionary war troops crossed with the supporting French troops on their march that concluded in the classic Yorktown victory.
- 3. Bernardsville Cinema** - Bernardsville (Cinema) Since 1913. Records show advertisements for live shows and theater back to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While it has morphed from one screen to three today, it remains a pillar to the entire Somerset Hills community.
- 4. Bernardsville News** - Bernardsville (Publication) Since 1897. Others have come and gone, but this publication has been the social, political, and newsworthy voice of the Somerset Hills for over a century.
- 5. M.J. Neil** - Bernardsville (Fuel) While the structure dates back before 1860, from the day the former owner declared he didn't want to be in the business anymore; it has been in the Neil's hands since the bill of sale was signed on July 18, 1918 – now in its fourth generation!
- 6. Grain House Restaurant** - Basking Ridge (Restaurant) Although first built as a barn in 1768, the restaurant's history started when 50 men were hired by William Childs to move it across the street to its current location. It was the original 'Old Mill Inn' from 1930 to 1977.
- 7. The Bernards Inn** - Bernardsville (Hotel/Restaurant) Celebrating its centennial anniversary in 2007, it is the oldest operating hotel in the Somerset Hills. Classic charm, classic beauty, and a classic mainstay for guests visiting the area...just wish they kept the bowling alley!
- 8. Sky Farm** - Liberty Corner (Nudist Retreat) Established in 1932. America's first nudist colony. Since acquiring the 35 acre property for \$3,440 it has functioned as a private cooperative for families and couples.
- 9. Brush's Deli** - Basking Ridge (Deli) Originally built around 1860 by P.C. Henry as the village general store. The Brush family has consecutively operated the delicatessen since the mid-twentieth century.
- 10. Meadowbrook Glitter Factory** - Bernardsville (World's leading manufacturer and supplier of glitter) Since 1934. Family owned and operated. A hidden gem at the base of Dead Man's Hill sled run! Visit <http://blog.t3consortium.com/top10historicbusinesses/> to obtain more information, cast your vote, post a nomination, or leave a comment.

## BERNARDS 250<sup>TH</sup> COMMITTEE

Since January, a group of dedicated volunteers appointed by the Bernards Township Committee has been planning events for 2010, when Bernards celebrates its 250<sup>th</sup> birthday!

The Bernards Task Force will sponsor four events in 2010 (dates to be announced): January: a "kick off" cocktail party at the Verizon headquarters; May: an expanded Charter Day with ceremonies, visiting dignitaries, and more entertainment; September: a multi-media production at Ridge High; and November: the burying of a time capsule at the Municipal Building.

To date, the following groups have announced plans: THSSH will sponsor special exhibits and programs; The Bonafides, in partnership with the Somerset Hills Branch of the American Association of University Women, will hold an Anniversary Tea; The Basking Ridge Garden Club will plant a garden in downtown Basking Ridge; The Piecemakers of Bishop Janes United Methodist Church are planning a history quilt; the Bernards Township Library is scheduling a historical presentation and the Trilogy Theater performers will present a dramatic reenactment of the arrest of Major General Charles Lee. (*Dates to be announced*)

Community organizations, groups, and individuals are encouraged to sponsor other 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities. Contact David Becker (chairman) at 204-3440 or Jay Barre (co-chairman) at 630-0199.

# Acquisitions

- Two glass kerosene lamps *Gift of June Kennedy*
- N. Currier print of Gen: George Washington 'Father of Our Country'; Framed engraving: bust of George Washington (American Historical Bureau) *Gifts of Lawrence Terricone*
- White pottery foot warmer *Gift of Elaine Getz*
- 19<sup>th</sup> C. young child's school desk *Purchase*
- 19<sup>th</sup> C. wrought iron kitchen match holder; circa 1900 punched tin lantern; leather book carrying straps; 1854 math book of Elizabeth Rush *Gifts of Connie Doughty née Kearns*
- Schoolhouse clock with antique case and modern works *Purchase*
- Book, The Way of Improvement Leads Home by John Fea *Purchase*

## New Archives

The THSSH Archives received several exciting gifts this summer. Basking Ridge native William L. Scheureman III donated an important collection of his father's files and other items collected from family members and other local sources. Several of the items are particularly significant for their association with the Brick Academy. Especially noteworthy is an engraved portrait of Abraham Lincoln published in 1865 – in its original frame – that hung in the Maple Avenue School and, based on its age, likely hung in the Brick Academy. Also a group of antique textbooks used mainly by Scheureman relatives in local schools includes an 1808 leather-bound textbook signed by John Meeker. Further research will be needed to find out if Meeker attended the Brick Academy. If so, this textbook will date to the Academy's earliest years.

Also, New Jersey cave historian Paul Steward donated a copy of Central Jersey Caver's bulletin on the history of the Peapack Quarry and the nearby limestone caverns, which, though now nearly forgotten, were the subject of intense public interest when they were discovered early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. THSSH Trustee June Kennedy provided research assistance to Mr. Steward.

The acquisition and conservation of documents, photographs and other information on matters of local historic interest is an important part of the mission of THSSH. For further information, or to make a donation, please call the Brick Academy and leave a message for THSSH Archivist Ann Parsekian.

## Welcome New Members

Kate and Brian Curran  
Jonathan Langley  
Maranda St. John Nicolle

## ANNIN & COMPANY FLAGS

By June O. Kennedy

This New Jersey-based firm creates the star-spangled banners that hang in the White House and at the United Nations. Annin flags have flown at the inauguration of every U.S. president since 1849 (Zachary Taylor) and wave from countless front porches across America!

**1847** Brothers Benjamin and Edward Annin established Annin & Co. in New York City to capitalize on their father's success making hand-sewn flags for ships on Manhattan's waterfront.

**1909** After an arduous nine-month trek, Commander Robert B. Peary becomes the first man to reach the North Pole and stakes an Annin flag.

**1919** Demand was so great after WWI, Annin expanded operations and moved to Verona, N.J. Headquarters is currently in Roseland.

**1945** Joe Rosenthal's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph (*right*) shows soldiers erecting a U.S. flag by Annin on Iwo Jima during the pivotal WW II battle.



**1969** Astronaut Buzz Aldrin poses next to Old Glory during NASA's Apollo 11 lunar landing. A horizontal rod along the top of the Annin flag ensures it "waves".

**2009** Annin & Co., now a sixth-generation family business, expects to sell about 5 million American flags this year. ([www.annin.com](http://www.annin.com) for stores)

**Note:** The Annin family settled in Bernards Township in 1721 from Scotland, fleeing religious persecution. The family name of Johnston was changed to Annan (later spelled Annin) in honor of their home in Annandale, Scotland. Their property was called Annan's Corner, and later renamed Liberty Corner during the American Revolution, when a patriot placed a liberty pole with streamers and banners, on the village green. The Annin family stone house, built in 1764, served as a school, church, hospital and recreation center in Revolutionary times. William Annin also served in the N.J. Legislature.