

Inside THE BRICK ACADEMY

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

February 2010



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2009 ANNUAL REPORT The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

By Marcella A. Miccolis, Chairperson

Executive Summary

2009 commenced with a Bernards Township resolution in tribute to the 200th anniversary of the Brick Academy. A year-long celebration included an official bicentennial logo; a building banner; feature newspaper articles; 'The Brick Academy: Witness to History 1809-2009' timeline; guest speakers; historic preservation exhibits; Bicentennial Supplement to *Brick Academy* booklet; and a commemorative keepsake.

Other 2009 strategic programs, detailed in the following report, include Community Outreach; Speaker Series; Historic Preservation; Education; Online/Internet Communications; Brick Academy Utilization; Fundraising; Artifacts; Archives; Consultation & Clerical; and Memberships.

2009 concluded with the Board of Trustees establishing a special Historic Preservation fund in memory of Lorraine Passmore who passed away in October. Lorraine was a longtime resident of Bernards Township, a dedicated THSSH volunteer for 42 years, former Trustee and Committee Chair, avid supporter of historic preservation, and dear friend of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills.

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The 2009 Annual Report is available at the Brick Academy
or online at [Hwww.thssh.org](http://www.thssh.org)

Community Outreach

In order to provide opportunities for the community to gain an understanding of the mission of THSSH, the non-profit organization participates in many Somerset County, Bernards Township and history associated programs:

Charter Day 5/16

The Brick Academy was open and received many visitors interested in Bernards Township history, local artifacts and the newly restored 1895 period schoolroom. On the lower level, Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead exhibited a model of the property, site artifacts and historic preservation photographs. <http://www.charterday.com>

Memorial Day 5/26

A patriotic red/white/blue wreath was presented during the annual remembrance ceremony.

Fall Fest 9/19

THSSH premiered an information booth at *Fall Fest* in Bedminster. The annual event, attracting over 4,000 people, features family activities; exhibits by township businesses, community groups, schools, and service organizations; refreshments; and live entertainment.

Lord Stirling 1770s Festival 10/4

The Historical Society exhibited a fair booth displaying history books, gift items and educational brochures.

Weekend Journey through the Past 10/10-10/11

The Brick Academy was one of 25 historic properties to participate in the annual Somerset County history weekend. Special events included a self-guided walking tour of Basking Ridge village, educational activities for young visitors and museum exhibits.

Local Artifacts

Collections are displayed at the Bernards Township municipal building, neighborhood libraries, local schools, and community events.

Tour Groups

Free museum tours are provided to educators, scout troops, senior citizens, and other non-profit groups.

Basking Ridge Garden Club

Volunteers assist with 'spring cleanup', the flower beds and holiday decorating at the Brick Academy.

Speaker Series

Conducted at the General Membership Meetings, it comprises a professional group of notable speakers. The lectures are *free*, held at the Academy and are advertised to THSSH members and the general public. Guest speakers in 2009 included: Barry Thomson, John Fea, Doug Reeder, Meg Wastie, Gordon Ward, and John Cunningham.

Historic Preservation

1. Several development and variance applications were discussed and comments were forwarded to the appropriate board: Davis subdivision; Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church expansion; Orthmann subdivision; Pentlicki application; Bramel/Bruno application; Craig application; Gibson subdivision.

2. In connection with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act reviews, comments were submitted on several area cell tower proposals: 460 Mine Brook Rd, Bernardsville; 25 Stonehouse Road, Basking Ridge; Route 287, Far Hills; Basking Ridge Train Station.

3. Committee members documented demolitions: Early 1800s Richardt house on Bernards Township Sons of Liberty property; late 1900s Placko house on Colonial Drive; the Kiwanis House at Bonnie Brae; and the Albrook School caretaker's cottage.

4. Committee participated in update of Historic Preservation Element of the Bernards Township Master Plan, and urged expedited action to create a Bernards Township Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, as recommended in the Historic Preservation Plan Element adopted April 4, 2006.

5. The Olcott Avenue Historic District in Bernardsville, a project cosponsored by THSSH, was listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places in May, and added to the National Register in November.

www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org/news_2009_08_30_olcottdistrict.php

6. In November, the Committee notified the Bernards Twp. Planning and Zoning Boards that it will no longer provide written comments to board members in connection with Planning Board or Board of Adjustment applications. This necessary action was taken with reluctance, since the Committee believes that informed input about Township historic resources has been helpful to board members and has resulted in better projects. The Committee will continue to be available to meet as a group with residents concerning proposed projects and will provide general guidance in accordance with Committee's previously adopted standards and guidelines, the Bernards Twp Master Plan, Rehab Subcode, etc., and may make specific design suggestions. In the future, members of the Committee may attend hearings to provide testimony in support of or in opposition to a specific proposed project.

Education

METC

The Historical Society instituted a new 'hands on' education program by establishing a partnership with the *Museum of Early Trades & Crafts*. The alliance with METC provides an exceptional opportunity to align our local history program to the NJ Core Content and Standards.

Historic Schoolhouse Summit and Symposium

THSSH sponsored the first statewide Historic Schoolhouse Summit and Symposium. Over forty participants, representing seventeen schoolhouses and organizations from nine New Jersey counties, met at the Brick Academy to network and share ideas on the challenges facing programming, exhibits and financial stability. www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org/news_2009_summit.php

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.

(Education continued on Page 3)

Online/Internet Communications

Museum

The main floor of the Brick Academy, features exhibits of local historic artifacts, the Lord Stirling Manor House, building restoration objects and the Annin Homestead of Liberty Corner; a 15-foot timeline of the schoolhouse's history; and gift shop. The top floor has been restored to an 1895 period schoolroom with an authentic pot belly stove, period furniture, student desks, early education displays, and antique textbooks.

Research Room

The lower level of the Brick Academy contains community photographs, historic preservation information, genealogy records, rare books, news articles, property deeds, and local maps.

Talks & Tours

During the past year, over 200 students, scouts and teachers visited the Academy for a local history talk, METC program and/or walking tour of Basking Ridge village.

Newsletter

'*Inside the Brick Academy*' comprises Society news, event calendar and local interest stories. It is accessible to the public at Brick Academy 'open houses', community events and at www.thssh.org.

THSSH History

The history of the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, observing its 81st year, has been compiled and is on record in the Research Room of the Brick Academy.

Newcomer Brochure

New residents receive local history and THSSH organization information. The brochure is also offered at the Bernards Township library and municipal building.

Walking Tour of Historic Basking Ridge Village

The popular guide is available at the Brick Academy, at the Old Mill Inn, on the Bernards Township Library website, and on the Historical Society website.

Lime Kilns

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

2009 was yet another building year for a consistent communications approach towards presenting The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) information and the history of the Somerset Hills communities online. 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, community artifacts, family genealogy, house backgrounds, and the rich history of the Somerset Hills. Countless hours have been dedicated to creating an ever changing and broadening experience for visitors to www.historicalsofthesomerset.org. From a pure construction standpoint, the website now contains over one hundred individual web pages (117), over 1,000 digital images, over 100 digital documents, and plenty of interactive flash video and slideshows. One of the most dynamic parts of the site is the new introduction page, where the page loads alongside two new historic facts and one new historic image every time the guest visits the site. Called the "historic tidbits", when the viewer visits any page, two new tidbits are always loaded at the top of each page.

The communication effort seems to be paying some rich dividends for 2009. Over 1,029 visitors per month visit THSSH online. On an annualized basis, that means over 14,500 visitors! (*this figure is estimated based on a transition to a new analytics tool in late August 2009*). Guests stay on the site for almost two minutes and view on average more than two pages each time they visit, which is a marked improvement over 2008. Additionally, over 80 people felt compelled to write directly to THSSH with questions or comments as a result of visiting the website. Since less than 2% of online guests are using dialup connections, we can continue to build out richer content including video and larger digital documents. While only 8% of all visitors knew exactly how to find us online, almost 60% found THSSH via search engines such as Google and Yahoo. So maximizing our placement with search engines will be critical.

Also adding www.thssh.org will help improve the direct find metrics. One note - over 85% of all visitors to THSSH were classified as "new" visitors since we converted to a new analytics tool in late August 2009. A more detailed measurement capability will be available for 2010.

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 Raising

- Gift items are sold at the Brick Academy and community events as well as displayed on the Historical Society website.
- 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 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 by way of three hundred popular retail stores.
- Revenue generated from the 2010 Holiday House Tour will be used for ongoing restoration projects, community programs and the annual THSSH operating budget.

Gifts & Acquisitions

The Historical Society received and purchased an array of local historic artifacts and archives during the past year. Items are listed in the detailed 2009 Annual Report at the Brick Academy or at www.thssh.org

Archives

Exhibits:

- "Basking Ridge in Historic Postcards," at Bernards Township Library
- "50 Years Ago: Bernards Township's Grand Bicentennial Celebration," at Bernards Township Library
- "The Brick Academy: Witness to History 1809-2009," at the Brick Academy

Miscellaneous:

- Members of the Ridge History Club and their advisors met at the Brick Academy four afternoons in November and December to research several projects in connection with Bernards 250th Anniversary
- 2009 Bicentennial Supplement to *Brick Academy* booklet
- Local historical photos provided to the *Star Ledger*
- Eleven website inquiries researched

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.

Memberships

- The Historical Society gratefully received eleven new memberships (individual and family) in 2009.
- 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*.

2010 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 2010 programs include:

Bernards Township 250th Anniversary

THSSH will serve an essential role in the year-long celebration with event announcements in *Inside the Brick Academy* newsletter; artifact lecture at the Bernards Township library; reprints of the photography book *'Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons'*; research assistance for local school projects; a commemorative garden at the Brick Academy; a local history-theme production for a membership meeting; a street booth on Charter Day; 'Open House' at the Brick Academy with exclusive Bernards Township history exhibits for Charter Day, Weekend Journey Through the Past and the Holiday House Tour. Visit www.bernards250.com

Education Program

The Historical Society will continue to enhance its respected youth education program at the Brick Academy:

- Local history talks with area school children
- Student reenactment in the 1895 period schoolroom by *Museum of Early Trades & Crafts*
- Boy & Girl Scout Troop visits
- History VolunTEENS

Online/Internet

Plans are in place to continue to build out the web capabilities. Social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter, along with the newly created website www.bernards250.com will expand the cooperative online dialogue for our visitors. We will continue to provide information on the efforts of THSSH as well as the Bernards Township 250th Anniversary celebration as requests continue to come in for additional information. There

will also be a concerted effort to synchronize efforts across the various communication channels to broaden the coverage of the website.

Holiday House Tour

The 16th Holiday House Tour is scheduled for Sunday, December 5. Attended by an expected 500 visitors, the biennial fundraiser features 5-6 diverse and architecturally significant homes within the Somerset Hills. This year's event will coincide with Bernards Township's 250th Anniversary celebration. The Brick Academy will serve as the hospitality center with exclusive Bernards Township history storyboards, tours of the 1895 period schoolroom, local artifact displays, and a graphic timeline of the landmark building's history.

Spring Programs

Mark your calendar for an exciting spring season!

March 18

'What not to wear in the 18th Century'
Kimberly Costa

April 15

'Songs from the Pre-Revolutionary era'
Nancy Schill
Charlie Pellegrino

May 20

Historic Preservation Awards

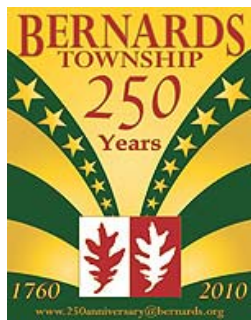
Free Admission • Refreshments

Programs begin at 7:30 PM
Brick Academy
15 W. Oak St., Basking Ridge

Details at Hwww.thssh.org

BERNARDS 250th ANNIVERSARY EVENTS ANNOUNCED

By June O. Kennedy



It only happens once – a 250th Anniversary! In Bernards Township there are many activities planned all through the year by civic, school and municipal groups.

On January 4, following the swearing in of a new Township Committee, a public reception was held at the Liberty Corner Firehouse, with Mayor and Mrs. Scott Spitzer as hosts.

A 250th Anniversary Tea with musical entertainment and historical displays will be held on Sunday, February 28 at St. Mark's Church Hall, Basking Ridge. The event is co-sponsored by The Bonafides and American Association of University Women, both of Somerset Hills.

Parks and Pathways Day is set for late March, highlighting several of Bernards area parks. On April 24 there will be a celebration with the planting of a Liberty Tree and the daffodil bloom at the Sons of Liberty Farm Park, which will be dedicated.

May dates include an expanded Charter Day with honored guests, vendors, exhibits, entertainment, and sale of a commemorative envelope with special collection stamps. Also slated for May are a historical bicycle tour and a concert by the U.S. Navy Band on Tuesday, May 25 at 7 PM at Ridge High School (the conductor is a RHS graduate).

On Sunday, June 13 the Bernards Township Library will sponsor 'June in June'. Township Historian June Kennedy, in conjunction with THSSH, will present and explain the importance of local artifacts, some never before exhibited from the Brick Academy's museum collections.

Summer concerts in the parks are planned. Family History Day is set for September and will coincide with the Liberty Corner Fire Department's 100th anniversary and parade. Planned for October is a multi-media production at Ridge High School, featuring reenactments of local events, recitations, oral history presentations, and more!

Throughout the year there will be issuance of commemorative paper currency, student essay contests, a tile mural at Ridge High School students will be unveiled, with other projects still being planned.

On Saturday, November 13 at 11 AM, a time capsule burial ceremony will be held at the Municipal Building on Collyer Lane.

The Historical Society will conduct its biennial Holiday House Tour on Sunday, December 5, featuring distinctive properties, one of which may be Cedar Hill, a 1912 English Tudor mansion which today serves as the Bernards Township Municipal Building.

On Sunday, December 12 at 2 PM, a historical reenactment of the capture of Revolutionary War General Charles Lee at Widow White's Tavern in Basking Ridge will be presented by the Trilogity Repertory Company at the Municipal Building.

Other events throughout the anniversary year will be forthcoming. Additional information can be obtained at www.bernards250.com or www.bernards.org.

As detailed in the 2010 Outlook section of the Annual Report (Page 4), the Historical Society will continue to serve an essential role in Bernards Township's 250th Anniversary celebration with research support, special publications, membership programs, and community events.

Engaging Young Minds to be Mindful of Local History

History VolunTEENS, a new program, gives teens the opportunity to learn and promote local history while making a valuable contribution to their communities.

Brooks Betz, a THSSH trustee and Bernards Township resident, created and mentors History VolunTEENS. "We've reached out to Ridge High School's Social Studies program lead by Kristin Fox to partner and move the effort forward. Making use of the internet, digital media, and social media like Facebook and Twitter will be a new way for teens to share stories on local history. There is little local history in the school curriculum and many residents are new to the area, so History VolunTEENS is a perfect way to promote the rich history of the Somerset Hills."

"Kids today understand technology way better than I do" stated Betz, "What I'm hoping to do is let them run with the technology and think up new ways to promote our local history online." Brooks has been working for the past few years developing THSSH online, www.thssh.org, building out areas on local history, documents, and images from our historical archives.

The Historical Society also awards service credits for any approved project where there is direct involvement that results in a release to the local community. Already, teens have stepped up with a digital oral history, digital online video, and social media projects using Facebook. Bernards Township's 250th Anniversary celebration, at www.bernards250.com, has recently been integrated.

Students can also become involved with archiving, museum tours, research, and special events while earning community service hour credits. History VolunTEENS information is available online at www.historyvolunteens.org or on Facebook.

BERNARDS RECEIVES 9TH LISTING ON STATE & NATIONAL REGISTERS

By June O. Kennedy



What a way to begin the Township's 250th Anniversary year! On January 21, the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection notified local officials that the Boudinot-Southard Farmstead at 135 North Maple Avenue, a pre-Revolutionary War residence, has been listed on the State (9/11/09) and National (12/18/09) Registers of Historic Places. This is the ninth dual listing of properties for Bernards Township.

The other historic properties include Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church; Brick Academy; Alward Homestead on Chimney Ash Farm; Coffee House at Madisonville; Lord Stirling Manor Site Outbuilding; Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead; Franklin Corners Historic District; and Liberty Corner Historic District.

The Boudinot-Southard Farmstead was owned by Elias Boudinot from 1771-1785, then by his neighbor Henry Southard. Initially a modest farmhouse that was enlarged to its current size in 1940, it has a formidable history. Several times during the American Revolution, Martha Washington visited the Boudinot family, having moved from Elizabeth to escape the British. While a resident of Basking Ridge, Boudinot was a delegate to the Provincial Congress and aide-de-camp to Lord Stirling. He also traveled to Valley Forge with George Washington as Commissary of Prisoners. Elected as president of the First Continental Congress in November, 1782, he served one year, signing the peace treaty that ended the Revolutionary War on September 3, 1783. A research paper has revealed that Boudinot left Congress for several weeks in 1781, returning home in time to see the French Army's departure for Yorktown. French troops had encamped overnight in Liberty Corner on the present English Farm.

Other political notables associated with the residence include Representative Henry Southard, whose son, Samuel Lewis Southard, was born there in 1787. Samuel would later become a U.S. Senator, NJ Governor, Secretary of the Navy, President Pro-Tem of the Senate under President John Tyler, and Chief Justice of the NJ Supreme Court. He and his father were the first father-son duo in Congress and co-sponsored the Missouri Compromise Bill.

Upon his arrival in Basking Ridge, Reverend Robert Finley's mentor was Henry Southard. Finley lived with the Southard family until he married Esther Caldwell in 1798. It was the senior Southard who delivered the farewell speech from the pulpit of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church when Dr. Finley relocated to Georgia in 1817.

Elias Boudinot is believed to have built the farmstead in 1771 and the Southards lived there until 1818. The historic landmark has changed hands several times; 20th century owners included the Beinecke and Ross families. The property was purchased by Somerset County in May, 2005 for \$7 million and includes the impressive three-story mansion and 61 surrounding acres. The residence sits majestically on a hill and has a center hall plan with three end chimneys. Architecturally, it appears Federal style on the south/westerly facade and Georgian style on the north/easterly facade. With a large contemporary barn and several other out-buildings, its position and appearance tend to make the Boudinot-Southard Farmstead one of the most pretentious buildings in Bernards Township.

Additional information is available online - www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org/profile_boudinot_estate.php

Welcome to our New Members...

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills is pleased to announce the following new memberships:

Kevin Fox, *Basking Ridge*
Jean Garzillo, *Basking Ridge*
Mary Kempen, *Basking Ridge*
John Kern, *Livingston*
Neil & Virlea Klingenburg, *Basking Ridge*
The Petitt Family, *Basking Ridge*