



Inside the Brick Academy

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

October, 2006

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

As the lazy, hazy days of summer become a faint memory, The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) has embraced autumn with an exciting schedule of vibrant new projects, special programs and community events.

In September, we sponsored a 'country store' at the historic encampment to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route. The weekend event drew a large crowd of spectators to Buillon's Tavern, now the English family farmstead in Liberty Corner.

We kicked off our fall lecture series with David Cowell, an antiques dealer and appraiser. His presentation "Turn Your Plate Over and Have a Good Read!" was an enlightening discussion on the emergence of modern dinnerware and how to date and place china and pottery from the mid-18th to the 21st century.

After several months of design, our web site is near completion (bringing us into the 21st century!). A presence on the Internet will increase awareness of the Society and the Brick Academy; publicize our programs and activities; encourage interest in and share information about local history; and enhance our reputation as a respected history organization.

The first of October found us among the colonial crafters, military soldiers and period performers at the Lord Stirling 1770s Festival. Just two weeks later, we coordinated one of our largest community events by participating in The Cultural & Heritage Commission's *Weekend Journey through the Past*, Somerset County's first collaborative heritage tourism event of 23 historic sites. THSSH was honored to sponsor two of Bernards Township's significant sites; *the Brick Academy* and the *Boudinot-Southard-Ross Property*. Special thanks to our many volunteers who helped organize the two-day event of actors portraying historical figures, walking tours,

exhibitions of local history events, musical entertainment and interactive family activities.

However, it has not been all fun and games! We are hard at work on the restoration of the top floor of the Brick Academy. The finished space will focus on children and include the recreation of a late 19th century schoolroom with exhibits on early schools and education. Our Museum Curator is carefully cataloging artifacts to be temporarily stored off premises for the duration of the project, our Historic Preservationists are methodically documenting existing materials and conducting paint analyses and our Restoration Project Team continues to work diligently to maintain construction budgets and project timeframes. The restoration project is large - both in scope and funds. As you renew your membership this year, please consider making a *special tax-deductible contribution* to help us achieve our long-term goal to finish the restoration of the Brick Academy for its 200th anniversary in 2009!

In addition to the interior changes at the Academy, visitors will certainly notice an aesthetic change outside the building. Thanks to our newly formed Landscape Committee and the Basking Ridge Garden Club we have redesigned the flower beds to harmonize with the changing seasons.

Unquestionably, these projects, programs and events would not be possible without you! As the newly elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank our valued members for the time you so kindly volunteer, your enthusiastic participation in the Society and your generous financial support. I look forward to meeting you as we work together toward the continued growth of THSSH and its established mission to preserve, interpret and cultivate interest in the history of the Somerset Hills.

Marcella A. Miccolis

REVOLUTIONARY WAR ACTIVITIES DOMINATE SEPT.-OCT. CALENDAR

by June O. Kennedy

Members of THSSH were caught up in a flurry of Revolutionary War and colonial activities during the past month. Events included:

Sept. 15: General Rochambeau's Dinner Party at the Somerset Hills Hotel, Warren.

Sept. 16-17: French Encampment on the English Farm, Liberty Corner. The Society conducted a Museum Shop on that weekend, distributing THSSH literature and displaying exhibits; sold were tri-corner hats, mop caps, Liberty Corner matted 11 x 14 inch pictorials of scenes of the village with cancellation stamps; children's coloring and beginner's genealogy books, etc. There were many interested visitors who enjoyed the available brochures and visuals. There was a record attendance.

Sept. 16: Presentation by Dr. Robert Selig, noted historian, on "The Day the French Invaded Bullion's Tavern" (Liberty Corner), at the Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church.

Sept. 17: Dedication of the Monument commemorating the 225th Anniversary of the French Encampment on the English Farm. French troops were en route to Yorktown, Virginia and victory over the British. The monument was dedicated by the Basking Ridge and Beacon Fire Chapters, Daughters of the American Revolution, and is located on the Fellowship Deaconry property, Valley Road, Liberty Corner. A reception followed at the Deaconry.

October 1: Participation at the display table of memorabilia and literature at the Lord Stirling Festival, Somerset County Environmental Education Center site.

October 14-15: Participation in two day "Three Centuries of Somerset County History". (See related story in Newsletter.)

THSSH was one of the sponsors of the September 16-17 French Encampment weekend. Others included Township of Bernards, Somerset Hills Hotel, Basking Ridge and Beacon Fire Chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Somerset County Business Partnership, and W3R-NJ.

NJ TURNPIKE REST STOP AREAS ALL HAVE NEW JERSEY CONNECTIONS

With summer long gone and perhaps the yen to stay off the NJ Turnpike strong, here's a lesson on the historical names for the Turnpike stops.

VINCE LOMBARDI (1913-1970), Coach of the NFL Green Bay Packers. NJ Connection: Taught chemistry, physics, algebra, and Latin and coached football at St.

Cecelia's High School in Englewood for seven years.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON (1757-1804), American statesman, aide to George Washington and first Secretary of the Treasury. NJ Connection: Courted his wife, Elizabeth Schuyler in Morristown; helped form the Society for Establishing Useful Manufacturing which set aside for development the 700 acres at the Great Falls of the Passaic River that grew into the city of Paterson. Killed in a duel with Aaron Burr on Weehawken Heights.

THOMAS EDISON (1847-1931), Inventor (moving pictures, talking pictures, dictating machine, storage battery, phonograph records, light bulb). NJ Connection: First laboratory was in Menlo Park and he built another in West Orange.

GROVER CLEVELAND (1837-1908), 22nd and 24th President of the United States. NJ Connection: Only president born -in NJ (Caldwell). He lived his first four years in the State and retired to Princeton where he lived until his death.

JOYCE KILMER (1886-1918), poet, critic and soldier. NJ Connection: Born in New Brunswick, attended Rutgers College. Taught Latin at Morristown High School and eventually moved to Mahwah. He was killed in action in World War I in France.

MOLLY PITCHER (1751-1832) Revolutionary war heroine. NJ Connection: Born in Trenton as Mary Ludwig, she earned the name Molly pitcher when she found her husband, an artilleryman, overcome by heat at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. She carried water from a nearby well to him and other exhausted soldiers who called out, "Here comes Molly and her pitcher!"

RICHARD STOCKTON (1730-1781), a signer of the Declaration of Independence. NJ Connection: Born into a renowned NJ family, he was in the first graduating class at the College of New Jersey (Princeton). Upon his return from the second Continental Congress, he was taken prisoner by British forces, which broke his health. The family homestead in Princeton served as the Governor's Mansion (Morven) for many years.

WOODROW WILSON (1856-1924), the 28th President. NJ Connection: Attended Princeton University and served as a professor of political philosophy before becoming its president. Elected Governor of New Jersey in 1910.

JAMES FENNIMORE COOPER (1789-1851), novelist whose most famous work is "The Last of the Mohicans." NJ Connection: Born in Burlington in a house now used by the Burlington County Historical Society. One of his novels, "Water-Witch", was set in the Atlantic Highlands.

WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892), a poet, newspaper editor and war correspondent. NJ Connection: After

NJ TURNPIKE REST STOP AREAS ALL HAVE NEW JERSEY CONNECTIONS (Cont'd)

being paralyzed by illness in 1873, Whitman moved to Camden, where he spent his last 19 years.

CLARA BARTON (1821-1912), founder of the American Red Cross and called "angel of the battlefield" for her work with the wounded in the Civil War and two European wars. NJ Connection: She went to Bordentown to teach and established one of the state's first free public schools.

JOHN FENWICK (1618-1683), born of a noble English family, he crossed the Atlantic to become a colonist. NJ Connection: Purchased "West Jersey" from its English owner for 1,000 pounds and 40 beaver skins a year. Founded Salem and most of modern Cumberland County. Fell from royal favor and lost all his holdings before his death.

HOW DID ONE GET FROM HERE TO THERE?

By Ruth Hill Thomson

Our cars are so much a part of our everyday life. It's hard to think how people got where they needed to go before cars were built.

When my father, Garner Ferris Hill first moved from Mendham to Gladstone in 1904, he realized the need for a taxi and livery business. He started out with horses and wagons so he needed a building in which to "house" them. He purchased "The Blue Barn" which at the time was on the lot where the Scout Cabin is now adjacent to Liberty Park. He then moved it up to his property on Lackawanna Avenue; it is still there, adjacent to "Opah Grille."

He had teams of horses and wagons which were rented for many occasions and uses. They were used for excavating and for pulling the fire engine. When there was a fire call, my Dad had to harness the team, and rush to hitch them to the fire engine. By this time, usually, the house or barn that was on fire had burned down! There is a photo of my dad driving the engine hanging on the wall at the Gladstone Tavern restaurant.

When Dr. C.R. Kay, our town doctor, came to town he rented a horse and small wagon to make his house calls.

There was a great demand for taxiing servants from the surrounding estates to church and the train, for taking people to fairs or to the shore or just riding on Sundays and holidays. All of these activities created a real use for this service.

In 1909 my father and mother were married and went on their "driving honeymoon" in a Cadillac car- one of the few in town.

There was also a great need for a feed and grain mill as many people had horses and cows to feed, so my dad built a large mill for this business. The mill was built for \$9,842.00. The mill sheds were added in 1912 and it was remodeled in 1919. Unfortunately, this fine structure was destroyed by fire -arson- on July 19, 1979.

In 1914 my dad bought the beginnings of the farm machinery business from Mrs. Charles Tiger who owned the last farm on Peapack Road. The bill of sale, dated March 21, 1914 shows he bought "all that certain stock of goods, wares, and merchandise in the wagon house consisting of stock of wagons, harnesses, robes, blankets, whips, machinery, all the goods, and chattels owned by said estate. Also included in said conveyance, one Ford automobile."

In 1915, almost by accident, G.F. Hill began the automobile business. He started selling Studebaker cars, which was a natural progression since he had been selling Studebaker horse drawn wagons. This small beginning was the forerunner of the "Hill Chevrolet" business which is now "The Stable."

BRICK ACADEMY RESTORATION: MEMBERS' HELP NEEDED NOW!

It seems hard to believe, but Hurricane Katrina is having an unexpected impact on the top floor restoration project at the Brick Academy. Gulf coast reconstruction has driven up construction costs everywhere, and the result is that the \$70,000 in Somerset County grant funds will not cover the cost of the Brick Academy project and *we are short by several thousands of dollars*. We are exploring other options, including seeking additional grant funding, and, to be successful, we need to demonstrate strong, continuing community support for this project, which is the final phase of the Brick Academy restoration. Plans for the top floor include the re-creation of a late 19th century schoolroom and exhibits on early schools and education.

We'd like to begin work this fall, but *we need your help*. We are asking all members to consider making a *special tax-deductible contribution* to help us achieve our goal and finish the restoration of the Brick Academy.

Contributions should be made payable to THSSH and can be mailed to P.O. Box 136, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920. We hope you'll be generous in your support of this worthy community project!

HIDDEN HISTORY REVEALED

A landscaping project in Bernardsville has unexpectedly uncovered some very interesting local history. The Historic Preservation Committee was recently contacted

HIDDEN HISTORY REVEALED (Cont'd)

by a resident for advice on artifacts that were discovered during excavation work on his property. Preliminary evaluation of the artifacts suggests that they are from a long-forgotten iron forge that was in use during the Revolutionary War – potentially an important archaeological find and a first in the Somerset Hills.

Bernardsville lies at the southern end of New Jersey's Highlands, which was an important iron region during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Britain had encouraged exportation of iron ore from the colonies, but it outlawed finish processing, so forge sites had to be concealed. During the Revolutionary War, New Jersey's iron mines and forges were of critical importance to General Washington's Continental Army. Some forges would have produced cast iron for cannonballs and cooking pots, while other forges would have produced wrought iron for tools and horseshoes. Proximity to and protection of these vital resources were among the reasons that Jockey Hollow was chosen as a winter encampment.

Stay tuned for additional updates, as more information about this exciting discovery is "uncovered."

LOCAL HISTORY GOING ONLINE! (FINALLY)

Now that we're sure the internet is not just another passing fad, THSSH will be going online soon with a brand new website designed by historical society member Brooks Betz. Driven by frustration with the lack of information on the Internet about our historical society and history in the Somerset Hills, Brooks enthusiastically spearheaded the project, contributing both website design and construction, as well as much of the content.

Starting in November, up-to-date information about the historical society will be a click away. Not only will there be information about speakers, programs and projects of the historical society, there will also be an online archives of historic images and documents, which will be added to over time. David Becker, another energetic historical society member, has been working on digitization of the property files in the Brick Academy archives, which include old real estate records and photographs of literally hundreds of buildings. Brooks is working with the historians from the various Somerset Hills communities, who have been invited to contribute their favorite historic tidbits. The website will also feature an online history discussion forum, which will be moderated by Brooks. *Inside the Brick Academy* will be available online, too.

For more information, contact Brooks at brooks.betz@historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org.

Beginning October 1, visit the website at <http://www.historicalsocietyofsomerset hills.org/>. We look forward to your feedback!

PHOTOS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD WINNING PROJECTS ON DISPLAY

An exhibit of elegant color photographs of six Somerset Hills historic preservation projects will be on display at the Bernards Township Library during regular hours beginning October 1, 2006. In May the projects were presented with the historical society's 2006 Historic Preservation Awards. In the category of preservation are houses at 82 North Finley Ave., 130 South Maple Ave., and 201 Madisonville Rd., all in Basking Ridge, and 26 Olcott Ave in Bernardsville. In the category of adaptation is the Door Décor building at 67 Minebrook Rd. in Bernardsville. In the category of compatible new construction is the Pluckemin Inn on Rt. 202/206 in Bedminster. Photography is by John Parsekian, with printing contributed by Wayman Williams, both historical society members.

Preservation projects that are completed by December 31, 2006 will be eligible for consideration for a 2007 Historic Preservation Award. Watch for details in January.

WEEKEND JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST October 14 & 15

The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission sponsored a *free* history event on Saturday, October 14 (10am - 5pm) and Sunday, October 15 (Noon - 5pm). Tours of historic sites, interesting exhibitions and special family activities will be featured during the County's first collaborative heritage tourism event.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills is sponsoring two significant sites: *The Brick Academy* and the *Boudinot-Southard-Ross Property*.

Journey back in time by visiting 23 historic sites within Somerset including:

1. The Brick Academy, Basking Ridge
2. Boudinot-Southard-Ross Property, Basking Ridge
3. Jacobus Vanderveer House, Bedminster
4. Abraham Staats House, Bound Brook
5. Andrew Ten Eyck House, Branchburg
6. VanHorne House, Bridgewater
7. Van Veghten House, Bridgewater (Finderne)
8. Washington Rock / State Park, Green Brook
9. Rockingham State Historic Site, Kingston
10. Old Millstone Forge Blacksmith Shop & Museum, Millstone
11. Relief Hose Company No.2 Firehouse, Raritan

WEEKEND JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST (Cont'd)

12. First Reformed Church, Rocky Hill
13. Farm Museum, (on grounds of Montgomery Cultural Ctr.), Skillman
14. Bedensville One Room School House, Skillman
15. Blackwell Mills Canal House, Somerset
16. Wyckoff-Garretson House, Somerset
17. Lord Memorial Fountain, Somerset County Green
18. Old Dutch Parsonage, Somerville
19. First Dutch Reformed Church, Somerville
20. Somerset County Historic Court House, Somerville
21. Wallace House, Somerville
22. Coddington House (farmhouse), Warren
23. Kirch-Ford House, Warren Township

To plan your trip, call the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission at 908-231-7110 to request a printed guide, or to find out where you may obtain one from a participating partner. More details can be found on the event website: www.SCHistoryWeekend.com.

MEET THREE NEW THSSH TRUSTEES:

***Pat Gray: School Library Media Specialist. Member of Preservation Committee. Resident of Basking Ridge for 28 years.

***Robin Marion: Computer Systems Designer for MetLife. Docent Recruiter. Resident of Basking Ridge for 32 years.

***Joe Ryder: Chemical Engineer. Building manager for Brick Academy. Resident of Basking Ridge for 28 years.

DUES ARE DUE -YOU ARE NEEDED. Have you paid your 2006-2007 dues to the Historical Society? Your support is needed to further the work of restoration of the Brick Academy and also preservation projects. Every member receives newsletters, a 2007 yearbook and notice of events. To be included in the upcoming yearbook, members are requested to renew as soon as possible. Lorraine Passmore, membership chairperson, reminds all that your dues are tax deductible! Also: Trustees would very much appreciate it if life members would consider making a donation to the historical society at this time. Deadline to renew is December 1. Send checks to: THSSH, P.O. Box 136, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920. (You can live anywhere and still be a member!)

HAVE YOU VISITED THESE MUSEUMS? ? ? ?

Acorn Hall, Morristown
Craftsman Farms, Parsippany
Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Morris Township
Golf House Library and Museum, Liberty Corner
(closed for renovations)

Historic Speedwell, Morris Plains
MacCulloch Hall, Morristown
Morris Museum, Morristown
Morristown National Historic Park, Morristown
Museum of Early Trades and Crafts, Madison
Scherman-Hoffman Sanctuaries, NJ Audubon Society,
Bernardsville
Somerset County Environmental Education Center,
Basking Ridge
Tunis-Ellicks House, New Vernon
Van Veghten House, Finderne
Van Horne House, Bridgewater
Wallace House, Somerville

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

THSSH is pleased to welcome the following members who have joined us since the publication of our 2004 Membership Directory:

Mr. and Mrs. John Baker (Judith)
Mrs. & Mrs. Brooks Betz (Jill)
Mrs. Adrienne Bliss Brown
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Carhart (Margaret)
Mr. and Mrs. William Cronin (Margaret)
Miss Karen Doster
Mrs. May Duttonhoeffer
Ms. Patricia Emanuele
Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Fischer (Evelyn)
Mr. & Mrs. Edmund Gould (Bonnie)
Mrs. Pat Gray
Ms. Sonia Heijne
Ms. Meisha Hunter
Ms. Julia Kieran
Mr. & Mrs. E. Alexander Lazor (Patricia)
Mr. Glenn LeBoeuf
Mr. & Mrs. Shawn Lynch (Jennifer)
Mr. & Mrs. John Malay (Janet)
Mrs. Robin Marion
Mrs. Elizabeth Matlack
Ms. E. Joan Palmer
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pochtar (Beth)
Ms. Beverly Prochazka
Mr. and Mrs. John Schulenburg (Betsy)
Ms. Ann Ter-Pogossian
Mr. Gordon Ward
Mr. & Mrs. James Wooldridge (Linda)

NEWS FROM AROUND NEW JERSEY

Flemington

The Southard Building, a little Greek Revival building adjacent to the Hunterdon County Administration Building, is slated for restoration shortly. Presently used by the County Prosecutor's office on Main Street for cases

Flemington (Cont'd)

involving children, it has been deemed "inappropriate" to interview young crime victims or witnesses in such a highly public setting. The building was the law office of Samuel Lewis Southard (1787-1842), a Basking Ridge native who graduated from its Classical School. He went on to become a U.S. Senator, Secretary of the Navy, Chief Justice of the N.J. Supreme Court, and Governor of New Jersey.

Warren Township

The old Wagner Dairy Farm is going to be transformed into an arboretum. That is the plan of the Wagner Farm Arboretum Foundation, working in concert with the Gardeners of Watchung Hills. The desire is to create a botanical attraction on Mountain Avenue, on a sprawling nearly 100-acre spread acquired by Warren Township five years ago for preservation purposes. Plans include a 30-foot diameter gazebo, a formal garden, a Zen garden, picnic grounds, an outside classroom, a raised garden bed elevated 3 feet off the ground for people in wheelchairs to tend and nurture, and a community garden with plots to rent.

Somerset County Grants

The NJ Historical Commission awarded \$3.184 million in aid in August to 82 historical societies and research projects, cultural commissions and libraries. Somerset County received \$104,000 in grant funds. The recipients are: Crossroads of the American Revolution, \$14,000; Friends of the Abraham Staats House, \$7,000.; Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House, \$18,000.; Heritage Trail Association, \$20,000.; Meadows Foundation, \$18,000; and, Save Ellis Island, \$27,000.

Somerset County Board of Freeholders awarded the following checks: Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House in Bedminster, \$74,550; Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead in Bernards Township, \$14,246; Somerset County Historical Society for the Derrick Van Veghten House in Bridgewater, \$165,416; and, Somerset County Park Commission for the Duderstadt Farm in Warren, \$46,500.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

THSSH recently received the following books and objects for the museum.

BOOKS:

“Saving the Great Swamp” by Cam Cavanaugh

“The Governors of N.J. 1664-1974” edited by Paul Stellhorn and Michael Birkner

“Somerset Hills Country Club 1899-1999” Adele Nelson, editor

“Among the Blue Hills” Gift of Reverend Robert and Peggy Beringer

“Historic Roadsides” Gift of the Beringer’s

OTHER ITEMS:

A porcelain partial tea set circa 1840 and a pottery pitcher circa 1880 Liberty Corner area received from Mrs. Gertrude Boyle Cross

DID YOU KNOW????

December 18th marks the 219th anniversary of New Jersey becoming the third state to ratify the U.S. Constitution. The ratifying convention met in Trenton in the Blazing Star Tavern. As third state (after Delaware and Pennsylvania) New Jersey contributed to the momentum of ratification. That is why there are three plows in the new Jersey state flag!

HEADS UP ON UPCOMING TALKS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

All talks start at 7.30 pm:

Oct. 19 th	Dr. Hugh Evans - “The President is Dead-Politics and Medicine in Wartime”
Nov. 16 th	Laurie MacDonnell-Gaulke – “Doughnuts for Doughboys – A Salvation Army Lassie on WW1 Battlefields “

Programs subject to change. Call Sonia Heijne on (908) 766-4591 for details.

Inside the Brick Academy

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The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills,
P. O. Box 136, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

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George Helmke, June Kennedy,
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