

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1998  
The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

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The Board meets twelve times a year in addition to meetings for special events. As always, the past year has been very interesting and challenging for all of us. Some of its highlights are outlined below:

Community Outreach and Fund Raisers

1) The Historical Society of The Somerset Hills (THSSH) participated in three community events this year. We rented a table at Charter Day IV, May 16, where we sold mugs, T shirts, note paper, etc. and gave out much free information on our work and the history of the area. We also took a table at the Bernardsville Community Day, Sept. 20, and the Lord Sterling Festival, Oct. 11. Participating in these events gives us a good opportunity to reach new residents in the area who would not otherwise know of our work. The proceeds of all of the sales go to the Brick Academy Building Fund.

2) Once again the Basking Ridge Garden Club planted wonderful flowers outside the Academy. We are very grateful to them.

3) Two of our members attended a day-long event at the Princeton Theological Seminary in June. It was sponsored by the New Jersey Historical Preservation Office. We gained much information on procedures for historic preservation and brought back literature on the subject. This will better enable us to help people who contact us for information in this area.

4) On Oct. 2, the Brick Academy was one of the stops on a historical bus tour of Somerset County conducted by the Heritage Trail Association. June Kennedy gave them a talk on our history, and they had ample time to take our museum self-

guided tour and buy from our gift shop. Many were delighted to discover the Brick Academy and promised to return.

5) Our yearly Summer History Camp was as great a success as ever. June Kennedy conducted two one week sessions and 36 children attended. The \$2,000 raised is earmarked for Brick Academy restoration.

6) This year THSSH tried a new fund raiser which proved to be a great success. We printed a 1999 historical calendar with wonderful early photographs of the area. We printed 1,000 copies and began selling them in October. By the end of November we were sold out. These calendars were an inspiration on several levels: our profit from the sales was \$2,500; many people were vastly entertained by the photographs and the comparison with the same locations today; on a deeper level, they made many people aware of the Historical Society's work and the fact that a great deal of interesting information is to be gleaned from our archives.

### Education

1) THSSH published five newsletters this year. They were sent to our 270 members and also given out at our open houses and public events. Our editor, Norman Nelsen, does an excellent job and they are very much appreciated by all.

2) The Academy is open Sundays in the spring and fall from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. We have museum exhibits and offer a hand-out describing a self guided tour of Basking Ridge as well as a number of hand-outs on local history.

3) We have provided a number of students with source material for use in school reports.

4) Throughout the year lectures are given at The Academy to school groups and scout troops. There were two Cub Scout dens, two Brownie troops, and seven school classes who came to the Brick Academy as a "school trip." There were 349 children in all.

5) Due to the temporary closing of the Bernards Township Library the Brick Academy has opened on three occasions this fall for the traditional Library Story Hours. Also, until the library reopens, we are storing their files on genealogy, and have made them available to a number of researchers. We continue to get requests from all over the country for genealogical information. Providing this brings in a modest income.

6) We have supplied information for the writing of the St. Marks Church History and the history of the Bernards Township Police Department.

7) We have helped a number of people who are writing books, one on

antique post cards of the area.

8) Photographs from our archives provided the models for the local scenes cut into the "Travelers' Arch" at the Lyons Railroad Station, and some were also used in a guide book of Somerset County.

9) Artifacts of this area from our collection have been used by June Kennedy in talks given at Ridge Oak, Somerset Hills Adult Day Care Center, and the League of Women Voters.

10) We provided a number of local businesses with information on the history of their locations. Two of these were the owners of the Van Dorn Mill and the Old Mill Inn.

11) Some of our resources were used in the making of a video for Channel 12 entitled "Bernards Township Life Styles in the 1900's."

#### Utilization of the Academy by Local Groups

January - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

August - meeting of Heritage Trail Association

September, October - meetings of the Herding Association of New Jersey

#### Membership Celebration

A July 4th picnic was held in Southard Park. It was very well attended by people from three to eighty-five - fun, games, and lots of good food.

In the years when we do not have a Christmas house tour we have a Christmas party. This year's event was very festive thanks to the efforts of Joan Engler and Connie Smythe. We played a number of historically oriented games which gave the members an opportunity to get better acquainted.

#### Programs

These are advertised and the general public is welcome.

March - "A Petticoats Tale" by Susan Fogg Eisdorfer.

April - "A Year Here In Basking Ridge," a compilation of poems written and read by the author, Norman Nelsen.

September - "Antique Appraisal and Discussion Night" conducted by Martine White and June Campbell, followed by an "Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social."

October - "Haunted History", 18th century haunted house of New Jersey, by Al Rauber.

November - "A Celebration of 17th - 19th Century Christmas Customs on the Eastern Sea Board" by Phyllis Sanftner.

### Clerical and Museum Work

This year we were very fortunate to discover a few members who enjoy working in the office. This has not been the case for a number of years and we are delighted with the results. We have made great strides in reproducing some fast-fading photos and articles and have changed one third of our files from regular to acid-free folders.

### Restoration Work

1) There are two 18th century lime kilns in Peapack which we expected to take title to, along with a little surrounding property, in early 1998. There have been some delays largely due to delays in installation of a fence for the safety of the public. However, the difficulties have been overcome. We expect to take title within weeks and hope to have a festive grand opening in May. The kilns are of great historical value to the Somerset Hills.

2) In January we completed the work of replacing our two dilapidated 1924 bathrooms with a new unisex, invalid-accessible facility. We also have a new storage closet and repairs made to the lower part of the stair case leading to the cellar.

On May 2, Bob Blacklidge supervised 16 men from the Community Service Program, who tore out the ceiling and floor in the cellar of the Brick Academy. Dan Lincoln took photos and preserved samples of the old floor boards and soil to send to the State. This year we plan to lay a new floor in the cellar using boards saved from the Baker -Astor-Moody house, and redo the ceiling, installing track lighting. This will ultimately be a museum area. Architectural drawings and expertise were provided by Dan Lincoln and Jonathan Booth.

## Acquisitions

<u>Item</u>	<u>Source</u>
Miscellaneous personal artifacts, photos and memorabilia, including 1899 photo of Liberty Corner Parsonage	Mr. Ben Field
WW II military service record	Jane Steinkopf
Three aerial photos of B. R., 1946 Maple Avenue School, 1923 B. R. Fire Dept., 1920's Open bus with riders, 1915	Haas Galloway
Large model of Wm. Annin house done in 1910 by Dr. Lowry	Woodruff English
WW II uniform, photos, newspaper clippings, medals, & dog tags belonging to Mr. Lawrence Federy c. 1944	Laura Reilly (daughter)
Book - <u>Somerset Hills, The Landed Gentry</u> by Wm. Schleichter and Susan Winter	Purchase
Video - <u>Education In Bernards Township</u>	Locally created by many in 1998
Many photos of the Somerset Hills, 1975-76	Ray Jones
Book - <u>The Jobs Family</u> by Storm Jobs Yanicks	Mr. Yanicks
Book - <u>The Dark Son</u> by Denise Long (The Heikkila story)	Donated

## Association Memberships

- 1) National Trust For Historic Preservation
- 2) Preservation, New Jersey
- 3) League of Historical Societies of New Jersey
- 4) Somerset County Historical Society.

### Outlook for 1999

- 1) Complete restoration of the lime kiln property in Peapack, and open as a small park.
- 2) Continue outreach in many areas of education.
- 3) Conduct a 1999 Christmas house tour.
- 4) Continue restoration of the Brick Academy, especially the installation of heating and air conditioning systems with financial help from the township, and the laying of a new cellar floor. The heating and air conditioning will be of tremendous value because it will enable us to work in the Academy in the summer and winter, something we have been unable to do to date because of the extremes in temperature.

Respectfully submitted,

June S. Campbell  
Chairman - Board of Trustees