

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1999
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

1) The Historical Society of The Somerset Hills (THSSH) participated in two community events this year. We rented a table at Charter Day V, May 15, 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 Lord Stirling Park Family Fun Day, April 25. (The Lord Stirling Festival scheduled for October was canceled due to rain.) Participating in these community 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) THSSH prepared a study for the Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church on possible action to be taken with regard to the disposition of the Ehrenberg House (erected c. 1810.)

4) In early 1999, THSSH took title to two 18th century lime kilns in Peapack. We had a festive grand opening on May 8 attended by 50 people, including members of the Peapack-Gladstone Cultural and Heritage Commission. Among the speakers

were Ruth Thompson, President of the Heritage Commission, Mr. Gerardi, Mayor of Peapack-Gladstone, and June Campbell, Chairman of THSSH. The kilns are of great historical value to the Somerset Hills. This pocket park will enhance the historical interest of the community. Already a nearby restaurant has been named for it.

5) Our yearly Summer History Camp was as great a success as ever. June Kennedy conducted two one week sessions and thirty 4th, 5th, and 6th graders attended. The \$1,300 tuition fees are earmarked for Brick Academy restoration.

Education

1) THSSH published four 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 from September through June from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. This is the first year we have been able to be open in winter months due to an improved heating system provided by funding from Bernards Township. 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 326 children in all.

5) We continue to provide information in response to requests for genealogical information from all over the country. Providing this brings in a modest income.

6) 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, the League of Women Voters and Fellowship Village during a Civil War reenactment. Also a number of artifacts have been displayed throughout the year at Town Hall.

7) THSSH began working in conjunction with Dr. Quaaam Saalik on a joint project entitled, Basking Ridge: An American Legacy, which will document the history of the town of Basking Ridge from 1733 to the present. Primary source materials, some rare and previously unseen, will be used as the foundation of an inclusive historical account of the area. This project will feature the knowledge of local historian, June Kennedy. Advanced placement students from Ridge High School have already used THSSH original source material to work on this project.

It is planned that the product of this joint effort will consist of three one-hour segments and an accompanying CD ROM to be used both as a curriculum resource and as an interactive teaching tool for local, state and national schools. Furthermore, this joint effort will offer to the local historical community the following service on an ongoing basis: To scan and digitize existing photographs and documents that are currently unavailable to the public so that they will be available on floppy disc and/or CD ROM with accompanying explanatory narratives. The Brick Academy will be the repository of the established database, documentary, and CD ROM.

This product of this partnership between Dr. Saalik and THSSH is designed to give students, teachers and community members direct access to a local history that will speak directly from the past through integrating original source narratives, imagery and voice overs. We intend that the quality of this effort will encourage other New Jersey towns and local historical societies to use our project as a model from which they can carry on the broader concept of documenting and therefore highlighting New Jersey's contribution to an unfolding American history.

Utilization of the Academy by Local Groups

January - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

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

Fund Raisers

1) THSSH produced and sold 950 calendars for the year 2000 that feature a charming array of historic pictures from this area. For the second consecutive year this has proved to be an excellent fund raiser. Not only are people of the Somerset Hills vastly entertained by the photographs, on a deeper level it makes our community aware of the Historical Society's work and the fact that a great deal of interesting information is to be gleaned from our archives.

2) THSSH held its eleventh Holiday House Tour on December fifth. It featured five architecturally significant homes in Basking Ridge, Bedminster and Peapack. Spanning 238 years, they included an 18th century Dutch Colonial farmhouse, a Greek Revival workman's cottage, a 19th century Italianate townhouse, a pre-war Colonial Revival home, and a modern hilltop mansion with a panoramic view over the Somerset Hills. This wonderful community relations project involved the efforts of a host of THSSH members, as well as 50 docents and 15 parkers, and of course, the home owners. All had a great time and we made a profit of about \$10,000 which will be used in restoring the Brick Academy.

3) This year saw the fruition of one of our fondest hopes -- the receipt of a grant of \$39,992 from the Somerset County Preservation Fund to be used for further restoration of the Brick Academy. The success of this application was due in part to the support from Bernards Township in filing the application. ?????

Programs

These are advertised and the general public is welcome. We did not have as many programs this year due to the extensive work being done to restore the Brick Academy. There were also two programs canceled due to bad weather.

February - A slide presentation by Martine White, describing antiques, entitled "Good, Better, Best."

October - "China and Porcelain" slide program by Martine White and June Campbell.

November - "Art Restoration" by Richard Dobek.

Clerical and Museum Work

As the result of continuing work throughout the year by six of our members, In order to preserve our unique collection of paper archives, six of our members worked through out the year to reproduce hundreds of fast-fading photos and newspaper articles and to change our files from regular to acid-free folders. We have completed two thirds of this effort. Work to complete this project will continue in 2000.

Restoration Work

1999 has been a year of great accomplishments in restoration of the Brick Academy.

1) Installation of a new heating and air conditioning system is a major break through for THSSH. Provision of stable temperature not only enables us to use the building during hot summer and cold winter periods, which was never the case before, it also safeguards our collection of artifacts. This work was paid for by funds provided by Bernards Township.

2) A complete restoration of the ground floor is almost finished. This effort included laying a new floor with antique floor boards, repairing the original plaster on the walls, restoring the ceiling to the original beams, and installing track lighting. This work was paid for largely by funds raised by THSSH.

Acquisitions

<u>Item</u>	<u>Source</u>
Wooden bust of Ferdinand Van Dorn, by Harry Robinson.	Harry Robinson
Wooden Carpenter's vise, (pre Civil War).	Harry Robinson
Iron water pump, (c. 1910) from Bedminster.	Bensley Field
178 slides covering the building of Rt. 287 in Bernards Township.	Mrs. Charlotte Isenberg
Five slides of the construction of AT&T headquarters.	Mrs. Charlotte Isenberg
Real estate listings from the office of Ellsworth Dobbs covering Bernards Township homes sold in the last four decades.	Estate of Ellsworth Dobbs
Primitive oil painting of the William Annin homestead.	Basking Ridge Library

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 2000

- 1) Continue restoration of the Brick Academy, as made possible by the \$40,000 grant to be received from the Somerset County Historical Preservation Fund. Restoration will largely consist of work on the main floor. Preliminary plans include installation of a very small kitchen, restoration of the floor, tearing out the acoustic ceiling, and installing some form of unobtrusive lighting.
- 2) Continue outreach in many areas of education.
- 3) Conduct fund raising activities.

4) Continue working in conjunction with Dr. Quaaaim Saalik on the joint project, Basking Ridge: An American Legacy, to document the history of the town of Basking Ridge from 1733 to the present.

5) Participate in community events in order to raise community consciousness of the historical heritage of the Somerset Hills.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June S. Campbell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

June S. Campbell
Chairman - Board of Trustees