

Jane Campbell

Resolution #010057
Acceptance of the Historical Society of Somerset Hills
2000 Annual Report

Whereas, pursuant to Ordinance #994, on January 12, 1990 the Township of Bernards and the Historical Society of Somerset Hills entered into a 50 year lease agreement for lease of the township-owned Brick Academy located at 15 West Oak Street, Block 73, Lot 10, Basking Ridge; and

Whereas, pursuant to said agreement and N.J.S.A. 40A:12-14c, the Historical Society of Somerset Hills must submit an annual report to the Township setting out the use to which the building was put during the preceding year, the activities of the Society undertaken in furtherance of the public purpose for which the leasehold was granted, the approximate value or cost, if any, of such activities in furtherance of such purpose, and an affirmation of the continued tax exempt status of the Society pursuant to both State and Federal law; and; and

Whereas, the 2000 annual report has been submitted as required.

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved, by the Township Committee of the Township of Bernards that 2000 Annual Report of the Historical Society of Somerset Hills be accepted as submitted.

Dated: January 23, 2001

ANNUAL REPORT 2000
The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Bob Blackledge, Bldg. Mgr. & 1st V. P.
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George Helmke
June Kennedy, Publicity & Education
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Corresponding Secretary
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Constance Smythe, Social Activities
David Stone, Community Relations
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Lawrence Terricone, Recording Sec.

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:

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify the above to be a true copy of a resolution adopted by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Bernards, County of Somerset, at a meeting held

1/23/01
Diane Engler
Township Clerk

Community Outreach

1. The Historical Society of The Somerset Hills (THSSH) participated in three community events this year. Even though we had torrential rains on May 20, Charter Day, we moved into the Brick Academy (our headquarters) and an amazing number of people turned out. We sold many gift shop items and passed out much free information on the history of the area. We also participated in the Lord Stirling Park Family Fun Day in April and the Lord Stirling Festival on October 1. 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. Our yearly Summer History Camp was as great a success as ever. June Kennedy conducted two one-week sessions and 30 fourth, fifth and sixth graders attended. The \$1,350 tuition fees are ear marked for Brick Academy restoration.
4. In October the Bernards Township Girl Scouts put on a large fund raiser called "The American Girl." They asked us to participate by providing a table with artifacts from the 1920 period which corresponded with the era that the latest American Girl doll represented. The items attracted much interest.
5. In May June Kennedy gave a presentation on local history to the Meadow Ridge Civic Association using many items from THSSH as illustrations.
6. Items from our archives are used through out the year in display cases, particularly in libraries and the Bernards Township municipal building.
7. In February we hosted a small party to celebrate the completion of the restoration of our ground floor. It will eventually be our museum area to be named after one of our long-term past presidents, Richard Rozewski. We have begun work setting this up.
8. We have also advised a number of local groups on grant application procedures and consulted with builders planning structural changes to historic buildings.
9. THSSH has donated seven chairs that originally came from the Maple Avenue School to the Bernards Township Library. We have put a brass plaque on each chair saying "Maple Avenue School, Basking Ridge, 1903 -1973." This seems

particularly appropriate since the library is on the original location of the Maple Avenue School.

10. Two World War II honor rolls that had been stored at the Brick Academy for decades were restored and installed by the township on the lawn of Town Hall in time for the Memorial Day celebration.

Education

1. THSSH published three newsletters this year. They were sent to our 263 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. We have museum exhibits and offer a hand-out describing a self guided tour of Basking Ridge as well as local history.
3. We have provided a number of students with source material for use in high school reports. We also worked with two graduate students in research on masters programs.
4. Throughout the year lectures are given at The Academy to school groups and scout troops. There were 148 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. In March June Kennedy gave a talk to the Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church Sunday School on the subject of "Slavery in Bernards Township." We have a large file on this topic in our archives. This talk was of much interest to the students who plan to install a marker in honor of the slaves in their cemetery.
7. The work with Dr. Quanim Saalik on his project Basking Ridge: An American Legacy is still in progress. He has received a grant to continue his work and has recently video-taped many of our photographs. His ultimate plan is to produce three one hour segments and an accompanying CD ROM to be used both as a curriculum resource and as an inter-active teaching tool for local, state, and national schools.
8. This year THSSH has had made and paid for four historic signs which were installed by the towns to which they apply. One is on South Finley Avenue

marking the location of the Widow White's Tavern; one on Lord Stirling Road indicating his mansion; one on North Maple Avenue at the location of a Revolutionary War hospital, and one in Peapack-Gladstone to draw attention to the lime kilns.

9. This year THSSH published 500 copies of a book Lord Stirling William Alexander by George Helmke. The writing of this book was entirely Mr. Helmke's idea and took a great deal of work and dedication. We are very grateful to him for this effort and have already sold over half the books. Lord Stirling is a very appealing character to the people of this area.

Utilization of the Academy

February - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

February, May and November - meetings of the Herding Association of New Jersey.

December- We hosted a very successful Christmas party. The entire THSSH membership was invited and many of our new members came. This gave us an opportunity to get better acquainted.

Fund Raisers

- 1) Published biography of Lord Stirling (see above).
- 2) Ongoing sale of gift-shop items.
- 3) Summer history camp (see above).
- 4) Received grant of \$150 for history camp expenses.
- 5) We are still awaiting the \$39,992 grant awarded from the Somerset County Preservation Fund in December 1999. We expect to receive it in a matter of weeks at which time we plan to begin restoration work on our main floor.

Historic Preservation

The Reverend Kennedy Parsonage Farm House, recently known as the Geier House, is on property recently bought by the township for use as parkland. From 1750 until 1767 it was the parsonage of Rev. Kennedy, the pastor of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church from 1750 - 1787. Prior to 1759, while living in RKPFH, Rev. Kennedy founded a classical school for young men and taught classes in a small building next to this house. This was the first site of the classical school which in 1809 became the Brick Academy on West Oak Street. This history makes it one of the most historically significant structures in Bernards Township.

In November, nine members of the board of THSSH visited the Reverend Kennedy Parsonage and its outbuildings in an informative tour conducted by Andy Emory of the Township's Community Services. We were impressed by the many elements of the house which survive from its earliest construction and charmed by its natural setting among beautiful old trees on the bank of the Passaic River. We were pleased to see how much work has been accomplished by the township since it took possession of the property in October: temporarily patching roof leaks, draining the heating system, removing huge amounts of junk and debris from the house and outbuildings, pruning dead wood from trees, chopping out tangled brush, and installing a security system.

The Township Committee asked Bill Allen to inform us of the results of its December 7th closed-session discussion concerning the Reverend Kennedy Parsonage. We are relieved that the Township Committee has no desire to raze the house. We are eager for responsible occupancy of the house due to our concern about possible vandalism, so we were disappointed that the Township Committee have not been able to identify any appropriate Township agency to use the house on a temporary basis. However, we are pleased that the Bernards Township Police feel that they can adequately patrol the area to prevent vandalism.

We understand that if the Township Committee decides to improve the property for potential renters it would consider THSSH recommendations concerning restoration of the house. We look forward to being involved in the planning for any interior work in order to minimize or hopefully eliminate any changes that would irreversibly affect the historic value of the house.

THSSH is very pleased with what the township has already accomplished at the Reverend Kennedy Parsonage and we look forward to working with the township in any way that we can to help optimize its historical value to the township.

Programs

These are advertised and the general public is welcome.

February 17 - "The New Jersey Quarter and Its History" by Spencer Peck.

March 16 - "Pennsylvania Impressionism" by Dr. Thomas Folk.

May 18 - "American History Through Music" by Nancy Schill.

September 21 - "The Use of Photography as a Tool in Conducting Family Historical Research," by Sue Eisdorfer.

October 19 - UHistory of the Mendhams" by John Rae.

November 16 - "Pottersville, Peapack to Basking Ridge: Stories from Our Revolutionary Past" by Christian Wolfe.

Clerical and Museum Work

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. Our work has been greatly facilitated by the acquisition of a copy machine. We are delighted to have it!

Restoration Work

The restoration of the ground floor was completed in February. 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.

The restoration of an oil painting of the William Annin Homestead, donated to us by the Bernards Township Library, has been completed. It looks wonderful.

Further work on the restoration of the Academy will commence when our grant money is received.

The drainage ditch on the north side of the Academy was lowered to avoid rain splashing up and rotting the window frames.

Acquisitions

<u>Item</u>	<u>Source</u>
U. S, World War II Marine Corps dress blue uniform	Marvin Harlan 2nd Marine Division US Marine Corps
Artifacts from foundation of Annin homestead Video tape - ,'The Crossing"	Toll Brothers of Pa. Purchase
Book - <u>From Indian Trail to Iron Horse Travel and Transportation in New Tersey'</u> by Wheaton J. Lane.	Purchase
Book - <u>Momentary Bliss</u> by W. B. Carnochan	Purchase

Whiskey bottle embossed "J. W. Hoffman,
Basking Ridge, New Jersey" This bottle includes
original paper label.

Albert Doggett

Whiskey bottle embossed "J. W. Hoffman,
Basking Ridge, New Jersey"

Russell Clark

World War I flight suit -- heavy canvass with
bear fir and wolverine lining, worn by
Ludolph Conklin Jr.

Mildred Placko

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 2001

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,

June S. Campbell
Chairman - Board of Trustees