

*Jane Campbell*

**Resolution #020036**

Acceptance of the Historical Society of Somerset Hills  
2001 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 2001 annual report has been submitted as required.

**Now, Therefore Be It Resolved**, by the Township Committee of the Township of Bernards that 2001 Annual Report of the Historical Society of Somerset Hills be accepted as submitted.

Dated: 1/15/02

**CERTIFICATION**

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

1/15/02 19\_\_  
*Dorise Ayala*  
Twp. Clerk

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2001  
The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Joyce Allen                            | Donald Lorenz   |
| Bob Blacklidge, Bldg. Mgr. & 1st V. P. | Richard Macksoud, Treasurer   |
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| Sylvia Gambony                         | Constance Smythe, Social Activities   |
| Florence Hallgring                     | David Stone, Programs, Community<br>Relations                                 |
| George Helmke                          | Mildred Van Dyke, Genealogy   |
| Kennedy, Publicity,<br>Education       | Lawrence Terricone, Recording Sec.  |
| Doug Kollmar                           |   |
| Dan Lincoln, President, Grants         |   |

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. Charter Day, May 19th, was attended by huge crowds, and we were inundated by questions of all types related to our work. We sold many gift items and passed out much free information. The Lord Stirling Festival, October 7th, was a wonderful event devoted purely to history in one form or another and we were equally successful there. 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) May 2nd - we gave a lecture on local history and a tour of the Brick Academy to a group from Fellowship Village.

4) May 25th - we gave a similar tour and lecture to 25 people from out of state as well as a walking tour of Basking Ridge.

5) June 11th - another similar event was held for four families recently moved to Basking Ridge.

6) November 14th - we gave a tour of the Brick Academy and conducted a question and answer session for 45 newcomers to the area. The session was met with great enthusiasm.

7) Items from our archives are used throughout the year in display cases, particularly in libraries and the Bernards Township municipal building.

8) We nominated two local residents for awards from the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission. A history award went to George Helmke for writing Lord Stirling, William Alexander, and a preservation award went to Craig Johnson for the restoration of his 18th century home on Mt. Airy Rd.

9) We have also advised a number of local groups on grant application procedures and consulted with builders and the Township concerning structural changes to historic buildings, removal of such buildings, and the installation of bicycle paths.

#### Education

1) THSSH published two newsletters this year. They were sent to our 270 members and also given out at our open houses and public events. They are helpful in informing the public of our activities.

2) The Academy is open 37 Sundays from September through June from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. We have museum exhibits and offer a handout describing a self-guided tour of Basking Ridge as well as local history. We have recently put together a new exhibit on Lord Stirling comprising letters, portraits, our recently published biography of his life, and a wonderful collection of artifacts from the Lord Stirling dig. These are on loan from the Somerset County Park Commission Environmental Education Center and are accompanied by photos of the dig process.

3) We have provided a number of students with source material for use in high school reports, and have provided local residents with information on the history of their houses and, in one case, with a number of area maps.

4) Throughout the year eight lectures were given at The Academy to school groups and scout troops. There were 85 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) THSSH helped a newly formed archival group at the Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church with information and advice on how to proceed with their work. We had a subsequent meeting with them at the Brick Academy to provide them with copies of material from our files.

7) George Helmke was the keynote speaker at the July 4th Washington Campground Association celebration in Bound Brook.

8) There has been much renewed interest this year in the march of French troops under the leadership of General Rochambeau. Our archival department provided maps to David Mitros, Morris County Historian, concerning Rochambeau's encampments in Liberty Corner both in 1781 and 1782.

9) We provided similar information for a lecture on Rochambeau sponsored by the D.A.R. and held September 13th at Fellowship Village.

#### Utilization of the Academy

February - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

April, September and November - meetings of the Herding Association of New Jersey.

See "Community Outreach," "Education" and "Fund Raisers" sections of this report for details on the fifty-eight occasions on which the Brick Academy was used for working with member of the public.

The Academy served as the rest stop during our "Holiday House Tour," December 2nd. Over the course of five hours 600 people came for refreshments and to view our exhibits. Many also purchased items from our gift shop, which helped our fund raising effort.

#### Fund Raisers

\_\_\_\_\_1) THSSH produced and sold 1000 calendars for the year 2002 that feature a charming array of historic pictures from the area. For the third year this has proved to be an excellent fund raiser. Not only are people of the Somerset Hills vastly entertained by the photographs, but, 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) Ongoing sale of gift-shop items.

3) THSSH held its 12th Holiday House Tour on December 2nd attended by 600 people. It featured six architecturally significant homes in Basking Ridge, Bernardsville, and Mendham. Spanning 225 years, they included an 18th century Dutch-style stone farm house, an 1875 high-Victorian estate, a 1900 carriage house renovated to living quarters in 1975, a 1900 colonial revival home, a 1906 Homestead-style stucco home, and a 1989 Shaker colonial-style home. This wonderful community relations project involved the efforts of a host of THSSH members, as well as 77 docents and 22 parkers, and of course, the home owners. All had a great time and we made a profit of \$15,574 which will be used in restoring the Brick Academy.

4) In 1999 we were awarded a \$39,992 grant by the Somerset County Preservation Fund for restoration of the main floor of the Brick Academy. We are still in the process of providing restoration plan documentation needed before restoration work can begin. We expect that this work will begin in 2002.

### Historic Preservation

This year the Township Committee took important steps toward preserving the Reverend Kennedy Parsonage Farm House (RKPFH). This house is one of the most historically significant structures in Bernards Township. The farm house and outbuildings are on the 36.5 acre Geier tract purchased by the Township for recreational purposes. From 1750 until 1767 this house was the parsonage of Rev. Kennedy, the fourth pastor of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church; he served its congregation from 1750 until his death in 1787. Prior to 1759, while living in this house, Rev. Samuel Kennedy founded a classical school for young men preparing to go to The College of New Jersey (Princeton), and taught classes in a small building next to the house. In 1809 the Classical School he founded became the Brick Academy on West Oak Street. The house, large with considerable charm, is beautifully sited on the west bank of the Passaic River. The ten outbuildings include a small 18th century barn immediately across the drive way, and a very large barn of the same period about 100 feet from the house. The large barn contains important early construction features.

In September, 2000 Bill Allen asked representatives of THSSH to tour the property with him to consider what should be done with it by the Township. Ever since then THSSH has been working with the Township Committee and its staff in an effort to assure preservation of the house.

This year under the direction of the Township Committee, Peter Messina prepared a request for grant money to do a preliminary study and to provide emergency repairs, and also prepared an application for eligibility for listing on the state historical register. The Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission approved \$23,000 to provide emergency repairs and \$52,900 to employ historical architects to develop a historic structures report for the two barns and farm house.

The Township Committee has awarded a contract to Historic Building Architects of Trenton to develop the report. It will contain detailed information on the structures' ages, condition, previous owners, significant events, exterior and interior work needed to prepare the structures for various types of use, and cost estimates. The study is scheduled to be completed by March 2002. The final stages of report preparation will require the Township Committee to decide what uses, if any, will be appropriate for the barn. Selection of appropriate uses for the barns and house can be the basis for the Township to request further grant money from the county and state to accomplish the work required to make them suitable for those uses.

THSSH is very pleased with what the Township Committee has already accomplished concerning the Reverend Kennedy Parsonage Farm House. In this regard we owe special thanks to Bill Allen, Carolyn Kelly, Andy Emory, and Peter Messina for their crucial efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with the Township Committee to optimize this property's value to the community.

### Programs

These are advertised and the general public is welcome.

March 15 - Sandra John of Sandra John Interiors, Bernardsville, and Alan Webb of Hampshire Corp., Morristown, talked on the restoration of the old Bernardsville library.

April 19 - Harry Robinson spoke on the art of wood carving. There are many examples of his work throughout the Somerset Hills, including a bust of Ferdinand Van Dorn at the Brick Academy.

October 18 - Antique Clocks by Melvin Kaye, past president of New Jersey Chapter #25, The National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.

November 14 - Antique American Indian Trade Beads by Dick Arnold, an interpreter of the fur trade era in America.

### Clerical and Museum Work

In order to preserve our unique collection of paper archives, five of our members worked throughout the year to reproduce hundreds of fast-fading photos and newspaper articles and to change our files from regular to acid-free folders. This has been largely completed and we have now moved on to recording and filing many pertinent facts to be found in scrap books that have been donated to us over the years.

## Acquisitions

| <u>Item</u>  | <u>Source</u>                      |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 125 poster sized equestrian maps of the Somerset Hills including property boundaries and names of owners.  | Scott Pfluger, Peapack             |
| Five different scenes of old Bernardsville (fifty copies each).  | Scott Pfluger, Peapack             |
| Memorabilia from the Koechlein Store, Liberty Corner - one order book and seven ledger books (1867 - 1906) | Mr. & Mrs. Dan Hart, Bernardsville |
| Book - <u>Northwestern New Jersey, A History, Vol. II</u> by A. Van Doren Honeyman, 1927                   | P. Davidson, S. Carolina           |
| Books - <u>New Jersey As A Colony and As A State</u> , four volumes by Francis Bazley Lee                  | P. Davidson, S. Carolina           |
| Photograph of Basking Ridge Fire Dept. in the 1950's (7.5 x 9.5 inches )                                   | Illya J. D'Addezio, New Providence |

## 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 2002

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.

Respectfully submitted,

June S. Campbell  
Chairman - Board of Trustees