

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2002  
The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joyce Allen	Donald Lorenz
Bob Blacklidge, Bldg. Mgr. & 1st V. P.	Richard Macksoud, Treasurer
Joseph Callahan	Diane O'Connor, 2nd V. P., Community Relations, Corresponding Secretary
June Campbell, Chairman, Curator	Ann Parsekian
David Connolly	Larry Schwenk
Joan Engler, Social Activities	Constance Smythe
Sylvia Gambony	David Stone, Programs
Florence Hallgring	Lawrence Terricone, Recording Sec.
George Helmke	Mildred Van Dyke, Genealogy
June Kennedy, Publicity, Education	
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 18th, 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 6th, 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 maintained these beds throughout the season.

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

4) We nominated two buildings for historic preservation awards from the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission. One went to the Mellick House in Bedminster, owned by Jeanne and Perry Hall, and the other to the Stone Dairy Barn in Gladstone, owned by Finn Caspersen.

5) Murals and photographs of historic Bernards Township, provided by THSSH, are on display at the new A&P and at the Sunrise Assisted Living Facility.

6) We 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.

### Restoration

The Historical Society's greatest efforts this year have been focused on the restoration of the main floor of the Brick Academy to the way it appeared in 1850. Completing the Academy's restoration has been a dream of ours for decades, and this is a large step in that direction.

Work was begun in late March and involved replacing the ceiling and ceiling lighting, installing many electrical outlets, replastering, and making many complex decisions about the floor treatment.

In the process of doing all this we have discovered fascinating facts about school life in 1850. For instance, we found indications on a lower layer of floor boards of how many desks were used, and therefore how many pupils attended, and the location of the teacher's desk and wood burning stove. All these old layouts have been meticulously diagrammed and will be available to the public at a later date.

We also now have running water available for the first time on the main floor in a small kitchenette where we have also installed cabinets.

Painting is the only work that remains to be completed. It will be finished early next year.

### Preservation

The Historical Society has followed with great interest the progress of the Task Force working on the preservation and plans for the Kennedy Farmstead. The Task Force, appointed by the Township Committee, is made up of 13 members, five of whom belong to THSSH.

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> the Task Force held a "Kennedy Farmstead Day." The Farm was open to the public who had signed up in advance for tours of and information on the main buildings. Many Historical Society members worked as guides for this event.

## Education

1) THSSH published three newsletters this year. They were sent to our 295 members and also given out at our open houses and public events. They are helpful in informing the public of our activities.

2) Because of the restoration work this year at the Academy, it was possible for our museum to be open only through March. However, our recently formed Museum Committee has been working hard to make our museum more interesting than ever when it opens in 2003.

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. We also were helpful in providing information on history pertaining to the Raritan and Passaic Rivers to a gentleman writing a book on the subject.

4) In spite of the closing of our main floor, we have managed to give five lectures at the Academy to school groups and Scout troops. There were 52 children in all.

5) We had a historic marker made and installed on Lord Stirling Road describing the small airport that used to be located there.

6) On May 6<sup>th</sup> two of our members met with Brad Fennison, a representative of the Courier News. He scanned 71 pre-1900 photographs from our archives which have since been included in a wonderful book, Somerset County - Memories, The Early Years. The Courier News has kindly donated two of these completed books to our library.

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

## Utilization of the Academy

March - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

March - meeting of the Long Hill Historical Society in which George Helmke gave a lecture on the life of William Alexander, Lord Stirling.

June, November and December - meetings of the Herding Association of New Jersey.

December - a Christmas party was held for members and guests ~~in our newly-restored, half-painted main floor.~~ We had live music and a number of history related games. The guests showed much interest in the progress of our restoration and we all had a good time.

### Programs

These are advertised and the general public is welcome.

March 21 - Philip Kennedy-Grant gave a talk entitled "Back to a New Architecture" and told us about the design that is to replace Werring Chevrolet.

April 18 - "Acorn Hall, Morristown," by Bonnie Lee Nazeika, curator

May 16 - "Antique Costume Jewelry," by Marilyn Visakay.

September 19 - David Cowell talked about dining customs from the beginning to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and how they reflect events in history.

October 17 - June Kennedy, Ann Parsekian and John Campbell gave a presentation on the progress of the Kennedy Farmstead Task Force.

November 21 - "The Twin Towers: History, Design, Construction, and Collapse" by J. Wayman Williams.

### 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. This work has made it much easier for us to help people doing various types of research on the history of the Somerset Hills.

### Acquisitions

<u>Item</u>	<u>Source</u>
Old split rail fence to be used at the Kennedy Farmstead	Lorraine & Warren Passmore

Two conference tables, three small tables, and five swivel chairs	Donated by J C P & L through the efforts of Larry Terricone
18 <sup>th</sup> Century banjo barometer	Mr. & Mrs. Christopher O. Riddleberger
19 <sup>th</sup> Century school desk and seat	Louis R. Matlach
<u>Somerset County - 250 Years</u>	Mrs. John Serafin
<u>Social List of the Somerset Hills - 1970</u> , edited by Mrs. P. Taylor	Purchase
<u>Tales and Towns of Northern New Jersey</u> , by Henry Charlton Beck	Purchase
<u>Millstone Valley</u> , by Elizabeth G. C. Menzies	Purchase
<u>Henry Knox - General Washington's General</u> , by North Callahan (two copies)	Purchase
<u>Somerset County - Memories, The Early Years</u>	Courier News

#### 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 2003

1) Completion of restoration of our main floor, made possible by the \$40,000 grant from the Somerset County Historic Preservation Fund and approximately \$30,000 raised by THSSH through fund raising and membership donations.

2) Moving the office and archive storage facilities from their current location on the third floor to the recently-restored lowest level of the Academy. This is preparatory to the eventual restoration of the third floor for use as museum space.

3) Continue outreach in many areas of education.

4) Conduct fund raising activities including our bi-annual Christmas House Tour.

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