



Inside the Brick Academy

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

April, 2002

Cultural & Heritage Awards

Among the thirteen recipients who will receive awards May 6 from the Cultural and Heritage Commission of Somerset County are three winners from the Somerset Hills. Two winners were sponsored by the Historical Society of Somerset Hills (THSSH): for preservation, the Moelich (Mellick) House in Bedminster, c. 1752, owned by Perry Hall; and for adaptive re-use, the 1829 stone dairy barn of Knickerbocker LLC, Gladstone, Finn Caspersen. Also honored for preservation/restoration is the residence of Joel and Susan Woodard at 80 Mount Airy Road, Bernardsville.

Other structures cited for preservation/restoration are the Lord Memorial Fountain in Somerville and the Gaston Building in Somerville owned by Guy P. Holt.

Organization recipients are: for history/education, The Star Ledger, "Center of the Storm" series; for leadership/education the Washington Campground Association in Bridgewater; for history/leadership/education the Marconi Foundation, Franklin; for education the National Council of Negro Women – Raritan Valley Section.

Individuals who will be honored are: for leadership/education Dorothy Stratford of the Somerset County Historical Society; for education Dawn Fairchild of the Rockingham Association and Jeanette K. Muser of the Rocky

Hill Community Group; for leadership Catherine Illchert of the Watchung Historical Committee.

The awards ceremony will be held Monday, May 6 at 7PM in the Historic Old Court House in Somerville. Following the presentations, refreshments will be served. The public is invited to attend.

Costume Jewelry At the May Society Meeting

Marilyn Visakay of Roxbury Township, an associate appraiser with Bernards Appraisal Associates, will present a program on costume jewelry at the Thursday, May 16 membership meeting of The Historical Society of Somerset Hills. The meeting will be held at 7:30 PM at the Brick Academy. Ms. Visakay is an accredited member of the decorative arts. She studied antiques at the prestigious Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, DE as well as appraisal studies at George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

She is an avid collector of antique clocks and vintage glass and currently is writing a book about Vandermark art glass, an Art-Nouveau style. She operates an antique clock business called Treasures in Time.

The public is invited to attend. Refreshments will be served. Visitors are urged to use the parking lot side door (the main room upstairs is under renovation).

THSSH Trustee News

Ann Parsekian of Basking Ridge has been named trustee of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills. Parsekian is completing requirements for a certificate in historic preservation at Drew University, Madison, and is a graduate of Gettysburg College with a degree in history. Her professional career included human resources work at the Hertz and Celanese Corporations. She replaces retired trustee Norman Nelsen, who served as newsletter editor for several years.

Charter Day Festivities May 18 Displays, Games, Crafts

The eighth annual “old-fashioned town fair”, also known as Charter Day, will begin at 11AM on Saturday, May 18. That is when everyone celebrates Bernards Township’s charter from King George II (actual date is May 24, 1760).

There will be more than 100 vendors (crafts people, profit and non-profit organizations, community service agencies) on site in downtown Basking Ridge. There will be a student and senior art show in Westminster Hall of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church.

In conjunction with Armed Forces Day, the NJ National Guard will display a Humm V, a Hemitt truck for large fuel or cargo use, and a US Calvary World War II command unit. There will be a flight simulator from the Lone Eagle Squadron of the NJ Civil Air Patrol and another simulator from the US Navy.

Five vintage vehicles from Model A and T to a VW Beetle will be on display, a salute to the “good old days”. To satisfy hungry visitors there will be many food vendors present. Those attending will have a chance to identify twelve local history photos in Westminster Hall. Winners will receive luncheon and dinner certificates to local restaurants.

At the Oak Street School field there will be a variety of rides and games. Throughout the day and evening entertainment will be provided – a Battle of the Bands in the mid-afternoon and another band throughout the evening. An outdoor evening dinner and block dance are scheduled with food prepared by local restaurants.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills will display its historic memorabilia, maps, pamphlets, and also distribute “A Brief History of Bernards Township” brochure. Nearby will be a booth manned by the task force of the Rev. Kennedy Parsonage Farmstead, with information about the Open Space Project and sign-up sheets for the June 2 tour of the property (located off King George Road).

Do You Know The Answers To These Questions About New Jersey’s History

1. What famous trail in American history, which runs from Maine to Georgia, passes through 66 miles of northwestern NJ?
 2. Who was New Jersey’s first astronaut?
 3. What major NJ city was the scene of a decisive Revolutionary battle fought on Christmas Day?
 4. How long is the NJ Turnpike?
 5. What are New Jersey’s symbols?
 6. One NJ governor became President of the United States. Who was he?
 7. New Jersey’s first inhabitants were Native Americans. Can you name the tribe?
 8. What legendary New Jersey woman fought against the British during the Revolutionary War battle in Monmouth County?
 9. What is a length of NJ from High Point to Cape May?
 10. What were two of New Jersey’s pre-historic lakes?
 11. How long is the Garden State Parkway?
 12. What is New Jersey’s largest lake?
- (see answers on back of Newsletter).

Historic District Regulations

Each year there are about half dozen calls from local realtors concerning any restrictions for buyers of homes in historic districts. **THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS OTHER THAN LOCAL ZONING ORDINANCES.** Unless a municipality has a Historic Preservation Ordinance, a home listed on the NJ State and/or National Register does not have any rules to adhere to. In addition, all vintage homes have access to the Secretary of Interior’s resources if seeking specialized building materials, outdated trims, metal appurtenances, etc., in addition to low interest loans, where applicable. A State and National listing ensures there is protection from State, County, and municipal encroachment, and is a court of last resort for the homeowner.

How Some Somerset County Towns Rank, According To Age

Where does Bernards Township rank in age, with respect to its sister communities in Somerset County? Research done during the 200th Bicentennial in 1960 reveals that Bernards ranks fourth oldest.

Bedminster and Bridgewater Township were both chartered by King George II in 1749. Although early records have been destroyed, Franklin Township is believed to date back to 1735, when it broke away from Piscataway.

When Bernards was chartered in 1760 it was much larger than it is today. In 1806 Warren became an independent government. Others that followed later were Far Hills in 1921 and Bernardsville in 1924.

Bernards was named for Francis Bernard, provincial governor of the colony of New Jersey, 1758-1760. Because he helped to end the troubling French and Indian War disputes with the Indians and also established the first Indian reservation in Brotherton (Indian Mills), New Jersey, King George II created, by charter, the Township of Bernardston. Bernard left New Jersey and became governor of Massachusetts. There is a town, Bernardston, there.

Exciting Restoration Developments

In the process of restoration of the main floor of the Brick Academy we have discovered, just above the wainscoting on both sides of the room, large areas that were painted black (blackboards). These black areas would have enabled at least six children to work at one time at the blackboards, thus saving considerable paper, which was costly in the mid-19th century.

Historical Society Of The Somerset Hills Wish List

The Historical Society is considering framing some of its more valuable and interesting maps and broadsides so they will be ready to hang upon completion of the restoration of the main floor. If there is anyone who would like to contribute to this effort, the trustees would be most grateful. Of course, donors would be acknowledged on the display.

Ownership Of The Brick Academy

1809	Built with funds raised by Dr. Robert Finley. Land owned by Edward Lewis
1853	Trustees of the Basking Ridge Academy Association
1853-1894	Basking Ridge School District #12 of Bernards Township
1894-1903	Bernards Township Board of Education
1904-1924	Victor Council of United Workman
1924-1948	Junior Order United American Workers. Building rented by JOUAW to Bernards Township
1948-1975	Building sold to Bernards Township, continued use as Town Hall
1975-present	Owned by Bernards Township and leased to the Basking Ridge Historical Society. Name changed to The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills in 1988.

First In America – And From New Jersey

Arlington, steam engine, 1763
Burlington, chinaware, 1685
Camden, condensed soup (add water, heat/serve), 1897
Hoboken, brewery, 1642
Jamesburg, canned tomatoes, 1847
Morristown, successful telegraph tested, 1837
Murray Hill, transistor, 1948
Menlo Park, incandescent lamp, 1879
Newark, patent leather made, 1818
Newark, malleable iron, 1826
Newark, successful plastics factory opened, 1873
Paterson, planned industrial city, 1791 at The Great Falls
Paterson, silk factory started, 1838
Paterson, submarine made, 1878
Paterson, revolving pistol, 1836
Pompton Plains, rocket engines ,made during World War II
Salem County, successful glass factory started, 1739
Trenton, iron beams for buildings, 1854
Trenton, railroad suspension bridge, 1855 (made in Trenton to carry heavy trains over canyon near Niagara Falls)
Trenton, American-made china used in White House, 1917 (before that all china was made in Europe)
Vineland, thermos bottle made, 1880s
West Orange, phonograph played, 1887
West Orange, movies shown, 1889

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE SOMERSET HILLS

**Any donations of local history such as
Photos, books, post cards, newspapers, artifacts
would be greatly appreciated.**

Answers To New Jersey History Questions

1. Appalachian Trail
2. Walter Schirra of Oradell (six orbit flight around the earth, October, 1962)
3. Trenton
4. 118.5 miles long, from the Delaware Memorial Bridge to the George Washington Bridge exit (also called Interstate 95)
5. Eastern goldfinch, purple violet, red oak tree, and horse.
6. Woodrow Wilson
7. Lenni Lenape, meaning “original people”, a branch of the Delawares, and part of a larger group, the Algonquin Nation.
8. Mary Hays McCauly, better known as “Molly Pitcher”.
9. 160 miles
10. Lake Passaic (The Great Swamp) and Lake Hackensack (The Jersey Meadowlands).
11. 173 miles, from Cape May to the New York State line.
12. Lake Hopatcong. It is 7 miles long.