



Inside the Brick Academy

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

February, 2005

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2004 The Historical Society of The Somerset Hills By June Campbell, Chairman

Community Outreach

1) The Historical Society of The Somerset Hills (THSSH) participated in two community events this year. Charter Day, May 17th, 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 3rd, 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 and Linda Macksoud 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) In June some of our members rode in the parade celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Basking Ridge Fire Department.

5) Assisted the English family on October 9th with their Family Farm Day. It was a great success.

6) We nominated one of our members, Ann Parsekian, to be honored at the YMCA Volunteer Recognition Night – a very impressive event.

7) We participated in the Memorial Day celebration and placed a wreath on the Town green.

8) We continue to advise individuals on grant application procedures, and a number of home owners concerning procedures for restoration and how to get their homes on the National Register.

Restoration

We are now embarking on the last phase of restoration of the Brick Academy. We are delighted to announce that in the end of 2004 we were awarded \$70,000 in grants by the Cultural and Heritage Commission of Somerset County for the restoration of our third floor. We must now hire an architect to draw up the plans and then proceed with hiring contractors. We are looking forward to finally completing the restoration of the entire building, which has been the main objective of the Historical Society since its founding in 1928.

In the area of exterior maintenance in 2004 we did roof repair, replacement of boards on the porch and window sills, and painting of all exterior wood.

Preservation

The Historic Preservation Committee came up with a wonderful idea this year to promote awareness of the importance of historic buildings. They created an historic preservation award to be given to a group of owners who exhibited extraordinary consideration for the proper approach to the preservation of their buildings. The owners were given plaques and banners to display and photos of the buildings were put on display in the Bernards

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Township Library. The awards were given on May 20th at our general meeting and the event was well publicized. The recipients were: The Grain House Restaurant, The Carriage House at Coffee House Corner, the Wealth Strategies building at 11 South Finley Ave., the English Farm, and the summer camp buildings at Fellowship Deaconry.

In November the committee introduced new Historic Preservation Guidelines. These voluntary guidelines were developed as an aid to property owners who are interested in restoring or renovating an historic building.

During the year the committee consulted with several property owners on their historic home projects, and provided input to the Bernards Township Engineering Department on a number of Planning Board and Board of Adjustment applications.

The Historical Society continues to follow with great interest the progress of the restoration of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead. The receipt of \$550,000 in grants is indeed wonderful news.

Education

1) THSSH published three newsletters this year. They were sent to our 300 members and also given out at our open houses and public events. They are helpful in informing the public of our activities.

2) Our museum is open every Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. We have changing exhibits, a modest gift shop, and well informed docents to help those who stop by. Special appointments should be made for help with research.

3) We gave a number of lectures to Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, Indian Princesses, and elementary school children, 310 children in all.

4) On November 30th we entertained a bus load of residents from Ridge Oak who came to learn something of the activities of the Historical Society and browse through our museum.

5) On June 16th we were visited by "Leadership Somerset", a group sponsored by the county of over 30 people interested in all aspects of county affairs. They visited the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church and then came to the Academy for a brief meeting. They then proceeded to the Kennedy Farmstead.

6) We published a new, updated walking tour of historic Basking Ridge and, on October 9th, in partnership with Base Camp and The Lemon Lounge, we conducted a guided walking tour of the town. This was followed by a reception at the Brick Academy.

7) We have begun the work of photographing a large collection of 19th Century Dunham family diaries and recording them in digital form on compact disks.

8) We provided artifacts, reference material, and photographs to the Liberty Corner School to help with its 100th anniversary celebration.

9) We continue to be open 9:30am to 12:00 noon the first and third Wednesday of every month. A gratifying number of people come in for help, both for genealogical information and guidance in historical preservation.

Utilization of the Academy

January 7th - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

January 25th – Victorian luncheon and speaker sponsored by The American Association of University Women

February, March – Meetings of Friends of the Farmstead

April, July and December - Meetings of the Herding Association of New Jersey.

September 23rd – Ridge Oak Board of Trustees meeting

December 16th – Historical Society Christmas party

Fund Raisers

1) The ongoing sale of gift shop items continues at the Academy, and at Charter Day and the Lord Stirling Festival. This year we had two new items with photos of local scenes for sale: Place mats (now sold out) and gift cards.

2) We have begun a new policy of putting ads in our newsletter and find that it has boosted our income considerably.

Consultation and Clerical Work

In 2004 we spent over 300 hours providing telephone and face-to-face consultation to the public on genealogy and guidance in historic preservation, reviewing and cataloguing

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acquisitions, photographing privately held old documents for inclusion in our files, cataloguing our library, composing pamphlets and publications, cataloguing our files to improve their accessibility, cleaning the building, and much more.

Acquisitions

<u>Item</u>	<u>Source</u>
1870 wash stand for the lavatory	Purchase
Miscellaneous property deeds for Bernards Township	Don Cross
Early 1900s Bernards Township voting box	Town Hall attic
1773 print of General Charles Lee	Purchase
Stelle family diaries, Steele Bible, books, deeds, wills, and surveys	Miss Beatrice
Color print of Van Dorn Mill	Summit-Short Hills Historical Society
Large collection of pictures, photos, and other material pertaining to the restoration of the Van Dorn Mill, including a history of Franklin Corners	Summit Short Hills Historical Society
1936 dress uniform of Capt. James Sylvester Flynn Basking Ridge Company #1, Volunteer Fire Dept.	Betty Ann Ciucevich

Books:

<u>Our first 100 Years – 1904 To 2004 (VNA of Somerset Hills.</u>	George Helmke
<u>The Boys From New Jersey (WWII service men)</u>	Barbara Kramer
<u>100th Anniversary, Basking Ridge Fire Co. #1</u>	Fire Company

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 2005

- 1) Now that we have received our grant, we will proceed to restore the third floor of the Brick Academy. This will include drawing up plans and the beginning of actual work as time permits.
- 2) Continue outreach in areas of education on local history and genealogy, and provide information and guidance to people interested in restoring old buildings.
- 3) We hope to repeat the Historic Preservation Awards Program in 2005, expanding eligibility to the entire Somerset Hills.
- 4) Plans are already underway to develop a walking tour booklet for Liberty Corner and an audio-tape tour of the Somerset Hills.
- 5) Explore new ideas for fund raising activities.
- 6) Participate in community events in order to raise community consciousness of the historical heritage of the Somerset Hills.

226 Years Ago, George Washington Danced In Pluckemin

By June Kennedy

In 1779, to celebrate the first anniversary of the French Alliance, a gala ball was held in Pluckemin, with fireworks, dinner, dancing, cannon salute and lighted paintings. This was the headquarters and camp of the Artillery Corps under General Henry Knox. An archeological dig in recent years has been conducted there, revealing a military school for artillery training existing prior to West Point. Found was a military forge and the remains of an army hospital. 1,000 men were said to have been stationed there.

The event was February 18, 1779 given by Knox, with General George Washington leading the Grand March with his host's wife, Mrs. Lucy Knox and presumably followed by Knox and Martha Washington .

Fireworks and reviews entertained the army men and their guests. That night, between 300-400 officers and prominent citizens and their families from the area vied for the attentions of the 70 ladies present. The festivities began at 4 P.M. when 13 cannons were fired, one for each state. A report in a military journal of 1823 states the company

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collected in a large public building for an elegant dinner, followed by a set of fireworks and a ball opened by Washington and Mrs. Knox.

Historians disagree as to where the ball was held. Some report it taking place in the academy building on the mountain plateau outside Pluckemin. Others place it in the old Jacobus Van der Veer house.

Pluckemin was the site of the encampment of part of the American army during the winter of 1778-79. That winter, when the main body of the continental army at Middlebrook was facing the British at New Brunswick, the Artillery Corps was at Pluckemin, with Knox, known as the father of the American artillery, in command. The guns were parked and the men's quarters erected just outside the village to the northwest. The encampment of 49 batteries, 1600 men and many draft animals presented an impressive sight with its spacious parade grounds, buildings and barracks in the background. Daily practices were held on the grounds.

Knox was quartered at the Van der Veer house, just below the Bedminster Church. This house, later called the Knox house, was built in 1756 by the second landowner in Lesser Crossroads (Bedminster). The Knox family occupied it during that winter; the brick-lined framed structure continued to serve as a meeting place for soldiers and patriots until the end of the war.

The fireworks probably took place in a large pavilion or temple which was erected 100 feet long, showing 13 arches decorated with evergreens and each displaying illuminated paintings and mottoes descriptive of American independence and liberty, all supported by Corinthian columns. The center arch was ornamented with a large pediment, larger than the others. The temple was proportionately high for the exhibit.

When the fireworks ended, the company returned to the academy and concluded the evening with a grand ball. General Washington was said to have worn black velvet, with knee and shoe buckles and a steel rapier and his hair thickly powdered, drawn back from the forehead and gathered in a silk black bag, adorned with a rosette.

Scarlet coats, satin short clothes, military uniforms and striped waistcoats added to the color and vivacity of the evening with dancing to the minuet.

Martha Washington traveled to rejoin her husband after his long absence from home. General Washington lived in the recently completed Wallace house in Somerville during the winter and spring of 1778-79. The couple spent the entire winter at Middlebrook.

The winter of 1779 was fairly mild and with little threat of British attack gave Washington several memorable evenings of which he referred to the Pluckemin affair as an "elegant dinner".

General Knox was a former Boston bookseller. He had lost two left fingers in a hunting accident and in public wrapped his mutilated hand in a handkerchief. Mrs. Knox was reported to have worn a hairdo at best one foot high when she entertained at Pluckemin. It was reported that those "monstrous head-towers" were so much the fashion among the ladies of the Army.

Leading figures of those momentous times who were in Pluckemin on various occasions included General (Mad Anthony) Wayne; General Nathaniel Greene, Baron Friedrich von Steuben; William Alexander, Lord Stirling; and Major (Light Horse Harry) Lee, father of Robert E. Lee.

And that's what happened at Pluckemin 226 years ago.

George Washington Slept Here... His Lodgings in New Jersey

By June Kennedy

Historians claim George Washington spent more time in New Jersey during the Revolutionary War than in any other state. He lived three winters in Morristown (1777, 1779, 1781) and one at Middlebrook, now Bound Brook, from December, 1778 to May, 1779. He spent December, 1777 to May, 1778 at Valley Forge, PA. He moved his army across the state five times, fought three major battles (Princeton, Monmouth and Trenton) and at least 90 minor engagements.

That means he spent one-fourth of the eight years of the war in the state; his army criss-crossed the state four times, once in retreat and three times in advances.

When at Morristown, Washington stayed at Jacob Arnold's Tavern and the Ford Mansion, with troops quartered at Jockey Hollow. While at the Ford

George Washington Sept Here (Continued)

Mansion, Mrs. Ford and her family lived in two rooms for six months, and General Washington and his staff occupied the rest of the mansion. It was the coldest winter of the 18th century, with 28 snow storms in January and February; there were no supplies, clothing or food. Bedding was hay strewn on the floors.

In Somerville, General Washington stayed at the Wallace house in 1778 where he paid \$1,000 to rent it. At Rocky Hill in 1783 at Rockingham he wrote his farewell speech to the troops. General Washington planned his campaigns against the Iroquois, Mohawk and Huron Indians when in Somerville, and while his troops were being drilled to fight as professional European soldiers at Middlebrook. (Somerset County is the only county in the USA with two Washington headquarters – Wallace House, Somerville and Rockingham in Franklin Township, near Rocky Hill.)

Meet Elias Boudinot—Patriot, Statesman And Former Basking Ridge Resident

By June Kennedy

It was Elias Boudinot, a former Basking Ridge resident, and president of the First Continental Congress, who suggested to George Washington that Thanksgiving Day be declared a national holiday, to give thanks for the new nation and its constitution in 1789. But who was he?

Born in 1740, Boudinot studied law at Princeton and settled in Elizabeth, where his house is now a museum, Boxwood Hall. He was elected to the Continental Congress and with his family temporarily lived in exile from Elizabeth to Basking Ridge during the American Revolution owning an estate on North Maple Avenue. He later sold the property to Henry Southard, who with his son, Samuel, would both serve in the US Congress at the same time.

Boudinot signed the peace treaty ending the Revolutionary War with England. With his help, New Jersey became the third state to ratify the Constitution. He escorted George Washington to New York for the first inaugural ceremony, and was director of the U.S. Mint for 10 years. In 1816 he founded the American Bible Society. One author said, "He had few quarrels and no enemies." He was Superintendent of the Intelligence Department during the Revolutionary War.

Boudinot's daughter, Suzanne, became the bride of George Washington's attorney general, William Bradford. Boudinot married Hannah Stockton, sister of his friend, Richard Stockton, signer of the Declaration of Independence for NJ. Stockton, in turn, married Boudinot's sister, Annis, noted poetess. They resided in Princeton at the house called Morven.

Banking in Peapack and Gladstone By Ruth Hill Thomson

"A penny saved is two pence clear", according to Ben Franklin and ancient records show that there were banks thousands of years ago. Their chief use to the community was the safe keeping of money. Now banking is a very important business, serving the community in many ways.

When my father, Garner F. Hill started business in the community of Peapack and Gladstone, there was no bank. He had to take the Rockaway Valley Railroad to Whitehouse to do his banking. This trip took all day which he felt he could not afford to do so he and another businessman, Ellis Tiger, decided there needed to be a bank in the community.

Fred Crater who was Postmaster in Gladstone wanted the new bank to be in his building and Fred Ballentine who owned a large building in Peapack, which housed Peapack Post Office, wanted the new bank in his building. My father said, "I'll build a building for the bank in the middle of the community", which he did.

On September 21, 1921 the Peapack-Gladstone Trust Company was organized and housed in half of a building on the corner of Main Street and Lackawanna Avenue. The other half of the building was occupied by Hills Hardware Store.

The original capitalization of this new bank was thirty thousand dollars and it was run by three employees.

This bank over the years has grown and prospered and now has seventeen branch offices.

Local Preservation News

The Historic Preservation Committee has recently completed two exciting projects. The new "Basking Ridge Walking Tour Booklet" is now available at several locations in the township. Look for a free copy at the Brick Academy, library or municipal building. The Committee is now

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working on a walking tour of Liberty Corner. Watch for it this Fall!

Also, as an aid for owners of older or historic homes, the committee is pleased to introduce a new set of Historic Preservation Guidelines for those who are planning restoration or renovation projects. The Guidelines are strictly voluntary and are intended to inform interested homeowners and prospective buyers – as well as architects and other design professionals – about general architectural principles and design issues relevant to historic buildings. The Guidelines are available at the Bernards Township Engineering Department or by contacting Ann Parsekian at (908) 766-6103 (or email aparsekian@aol.com).

In December, the Historic Preservation Committee wrote to the Bernards Township Committee of its concern about the process used to approve façade modifications to the landmark 1750 Lewis-Dayton House at 33 North Finley Avenue. The Committee believes that work proposed by a new homeowner would be in contradiction to the legal covenants of a façade easement, which was donated by the previous homeowner to the township. The Committee recommends that the proposed modifications be reviewed by a qualified consultant for compliance with the easement.

Pressure continues on local historic architectural and cultural resources. But recently some local officials have begun to take notice. Bernardsville planning officials are currently reviewing an ordinance that is intended to prevent destruction of historic buildings in that town. And, in her first mayoral address, new Bernards Township Mayor Carolyn Kelly called for a demolition delay ordinance, to allow time to explore options to demolition. If you support these efforts to preserve the historic character of the Somerset Hills, be sure to tell your elected officials.

The Committee welcomes new members. If you are interested in our local historic houses – large or small, plain or elaborate – join us. Contact Ann Parsekian for meeting dates and times.

NOTICE

Program Director

After many moons of great service our Program Director David Stone has retired. We thank him for all his good work. Needless to say we need a new Program Director. Anyone who is interested or knows of a possible candidate please call June Campbell at (908) 647-2241.

Inside the Brick Academy

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