



# *Inside the Brick Academy*

Newsletter of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

February, 2006

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2005**

### **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 21st, 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 2nd, 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 and various outreach projects.

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) On June 4<sup>th</sup> some of the Girl Scout troops in town got together and sponsored a tour of eight historic spots in Bernards Township. The girls were the docents. The Historical Society provided them with much of their information and the Brick Academy was one of the locations visited.

5) We sponsored the English Family Farm Day on October 1. We also provided fliers on local history to be distributed there.

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

7) In October we entertained residents of Ridge Oak who came to learn something of the activities of the Historical Society and to browse through our museum.

8) The Historical Society donated four chairs from the old Maple Avenue School to the following schools: Liberty Corner – 2; Mount Prospect – 1; and Cedar Hill – 1. Two additional chairs were donated to the Bernards Township Library.

9) We donated craft materials left over from our history camp to the Bernards Township Girl Scouts.

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

#### **Restoration**

We are in the preparatory stages for work on the restoration of the third floor using the \$40,000 grant from Somerset County. The plans have been drawn up and we are beginning the preparatory work, such as paint analysis.

#### **Preservation**

In 2005 the Historic Preservation Committee conducted the second annual preservation awards program culminating in the presentation of awards in May. The program was expanded this year to include all Somerset Hills communities. The recipients were as follows:

## Annual Report (Cont'd)

Bernards Township	The Coffee House, North Maple Ave
	The Old Homestead, 189 West Oak St.
Bedminster	Barn, Fairview Farm, Larger Cross Rd
	Jacobus-Vanderveer House, Route 206
Bernardsville	Sacred Heart Chapel, Bernards Ave

A project was implemented to research the history of the Madisonville section of Bernards Township (the area around the traffic light at North Maple Ave. and Madisonville Rd.), which was the only hamlet that had not been researched. The Madisonville section contains the largest concentration of surviving 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings in the township.

The committee continued to offer advice and input to applicants and board members on zoning and planning applications that involve historic resources. We also continue to make available a set of guidelines for historic preservation.

The Historical Society continues to follow with great interest the progress of the restoration of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead.

### Strategic Planning Committee

A Strategic Planning Committee was created in 2005 to review the bylaws, mission, operations and goals of the Historical society, and prepare recommendations for presentation to the board of trustees in early 2006.

### 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 and tours to Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, and elementary school children. There were 450 children in all. This represents a fifty percent increase over previous years.

4) Due to popular demand we reprinted our Historic Basking Ridge Walking Tour booklets. The tour was also added to the Bernards Township Library web site as a PDF file available for free download. We continue

to distribute it and a number of our other historical information handouts throughout the area.

5) We replaced two historic signs that had been vandalized, one at the Lord Stirling Manor, and one in Liberty Corner marking Rochambeau's Revolutionary War encampment. We also installed a new marker indicating Historic Madisonville near the corner of North Maple and Madisonville Roads.

6) We continue to be open 9:30am to 12:00 noon the first and third Wednesdays 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 25<sup>th</sup> - meeting of the Berkeley Circle Association

March, October and December - Meetings of the Herding Association of New Jersey.

April 15<sup>th</sup> - Visit from the Newcomers Club. They showed great interest in our material on local history.

June 20<sup>th</sup> - Friends of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle (KMS) Farmstead Annual Meeting

October, November and December - meetings of the Board of Trustees of the Friends of the KMS Farmstead.

December - The Academy served as the rest stop during our Holiday House Tour. Over the course of five hours 600 hostesses, parkers and tour guests came for refreshments and to view our exhibits. Some also purchased items from our gift shop and joined the Historical Society.

See "Board of Directors," "Community Outreach," "Education," "Programs" and "Fund Raisers" sections of this report for details on other occasions in which the Brick Academy was used for working with the public.

### Fund Raisers

THSSH held its 14<sup>th</sup> Holiday House Tour on December 4<sup>th</sup> which was attended by 500 people. This wonderful community relations project involved the efforts of a host of THSSH members, as well as 75 docents, 22 parkers, and of course, the home owners. All had a great time and we made a profit of approximately \$12,500, which will be used in our many outreach programs.

There were sales of gift shop items, both at the Academy and at Charter Day and the Lord Stirling Festival. This year we introduced one new item - a "suncatcher" view of the Oak Tree, hand painted by a

**Annual Report (Cont'd)**

member's daughter. We continue to solicit publication of ads in our newsletter and find that it has boosted our income considerably.

**Acquisitions**

Item	Donor
Brass stencil saying "Sold by Ellis Tiger Co., Gladstone, NJ"	Joseph Krupsky
Early ice pick with "Frederick Andrews, Bound Brook Ice Co., Phone 359R" On handle	John Campbell
Set of name plates with cows names on them from the Fairhaven and Bakehaven Farm, which later became Lord Stirling Stables	June Kennedy
1905 Map of Bernards Township	Herb Hilman
1937 Bernards Township Zoning Map	Herb Hilman

**Books**

<u>Basking Ridge and Beyond</u> , by Norman Nelsen	Dan Lincoln
<u>The Shooting of Rabbit Wells</u> , by William Loizeaux	(Purchased)
<u>Lesser Crossroads</u> , edited by H. G. Schmidt	(Purchased)
<u>New Jersey and the American Revolution</u> , edited by B. J. Mitnick	(Purchased)
<u>Kearny's Own, A History of the First New Jersey Brigade in the Civil War</u> , by Bradley M. Gottfried	(Purchased)

**Consultation and Clerical Work**

In 2005 we spent over 325 hours providing telephone and face-to-face consultation to the public on genealogy and guidance in historic preservation, reviewing and cataloguing 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.

**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 2006**

- 1) Proceed to restore the third floor of the Brick Academy using \$40,000 Somerset County grant funds.

- 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 plan to repeat the Historic Preservation Awards Program in 2006, for which the entire Somerset Hills will again be eligible.
- 4) Explore new ideas for fund raising activities.
- 5) Participate in community events in order to raise community consciousness of the historical heritage of the Somerset Hills.



**PORTRAIT OF GENERAL CHARLES LEE  
The Man Credited with Getting Basking Ridge Into  
the History Books**

By June Kennedy

Just who was General Charles Lee, second in command of American troops during the Revolution? He has been called a mercenary, a traitor, a scapegoat, etc.

According to the 1825 Universal Biographical Dictionary, Lee was born February 6, 1732 in Wales. He served in the British Army where he reached the rank of colonel. He came to Virginia in 1773 determined to help the colonists. When war was declared, he petitioned the Continental Congress for an appointment as one of the commanders of the newly formed American army and was made a major general because of his past military experience.

Lee fought in the Massachusetts and South Carolina campaigns but on December 12, 1776 he marched with 3,000 men from Morristown through New Vernon and towards the Delaware River. When the troops stopped for the night, the advance had reached Bedminster. The greater part of their strength was spread throughout Mine Brook valley, followed by the rear guard in Bernardsville.

Leaving General John Sullivan in command, Lee with his staff and a small guard rode into the village of Basking Ridge to the Widow White Tavern atop the hill (intersection of South Finley Avenue and Colonial Drive) and accepted such accommodations as widow White had to offer. The next morning, a detachment of the 16th British Light Dragoons, a crack cavalry corps, suddenly appeared under the command of Colonel William Harcourt. The tavern was surrounded; Lee captured and astride his horse, was taken to the British line in New Brunswick. He was release four months later in exchange for a British officer of similar rank.

At the Battle of Monmouth, June 28, 1778, Lee was charged with misbehavior and disobedience of orders. Lord Stirling presided at Lee's court martial trial, where

### Portrait of General Lee (Cont'd)

Lee received a year's suspension. He died penniless in Philadelphia on October 2, 1782, at age 50.

Bernards Township has two streets named for the December 13, 1776 incident: Harcourt Lane and Lee Place.

Why was Basking Ridge Lee's undoing? Some speculate that Lee was planning to build a grand estate. Having visited Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, he planned to see Stirling Manor, Lord Stirling's estate about two miles away and then decide on his future home. There is a blue sign at the location of widow White's Tavern in the Township, with its legend of the historical event.

### BOUDINOT-SOUTHARD ESTATE SET FOR "MANSION IN MAY"

The Boudinot-Southard estate on South Maple Avenue will be the scene of "Mansion in May", the bi-annual fundraiser of the Women's Association of Morristown Memorial Hospital, set for May 1-May 31, 2006.

The property, located on 61 acres, involves a three-story mansion and is surrounded by open space land near the Great Swamp, Somerset County's 925-acre Lord Stirling Park, Southard Park and the Basking Ridge Country Club.

The estate will receive a first class face-lift, courtesy of designers who each take on a portion of the house to decorate. The event will showcase the designers' work. Long-term plans for the house and land are being developed.

The property's most recent owners were heirs of the late Edmund B. Ross. Purchase price of \$7 million dollars was paid by Somerset County for the open space property.

Elias Boudinot, the original owner of the property, was one of the distinguished officials chosen to conduct George Washington to New York for his first inaugural ceremony. He signed the proclamation moving the capital of the US to Princeton, and shortly thereafter he presided over the session there in Nassau Hall, when Washington was thanked by the Congress for his services in "establishing the freedom and independence of our Country." Boudinot was a trusted friend of Washington and in 1795 the President appointed him Director of the Philadelphia Mint, which office he held for ten years. In his will, Boudinot left the greater part of his large estate to various institutions and charities. At his death in 1821, one author wrote of him, "He seems to have had few quarrels and no enemies."

### PLUCKEMIN'S GRAND BALL OF FEBRUARY 1779

By Ann Parsekian

In 1778, the historic Treaty of Alliance between France and the United States provided for a defensive alliance to aid France should England attack, and that neither France nor the United States would make peace with England until the independence of the United States was recognized. As a result of the alliance, in 1781 French troops commanded by General Rochambeau were sent to help the Continental Army. The 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their march to Yorktown via Liberty Corner will be commemorated during 2006.

The treaty was a "matter of universal congratulation," particularly in Pluckemin where the Continental Army was spending the winter. A magnificent ball was organized on the grounds of General Knox's artillery park. Knox wrote in a letter that "We had at the Park on the eighteenth a most genteel entertainment given by self and officers – everybody allows it to be the first of the kind ever exhibited in this State, at least. We had about seventy ladies – all the first *ton* in the State – we danced all night – between three and four hundred gentlemen – an elegant room – the illuminating fireworks, etc., were more than pretty."

Abraham Messler's 1899 *First Things in Old Somerset* contains a fascinating description of the impressive celebration:

"The anniversary of our alliance with France was celebrated on the 18<sup>th</sup> ultimo at Pluckamin (sic) at a very elegant entertainment and display of fireworks given by General Knox and the officers of the Corps of Artillery. It was postponed to this late day on account of the Commander-in-Chief being absent from the camp. General Washington, the principal officers of the army, with Mrs. Washington, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Knox and the ladies and gentlemen of a large circuit round the camp, were of the company.

Besides these, there was a vast concourse of spectators from every part of the Jersey. The barracks of the artillery are at a small distance from Pluckamin, on a piece of rising ground, which shows them to great advantage. The entertainment and ball were held at the academy of the park. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon the celebration of the Alliance was announced by the discharge of 13 cannon, when the company assembled in the academy to a very elegant dinner. The room was spacious and the tables prettily disposed, both as to prospect and convenience. The

### **Pluckemin's Grand Ball (Cont'd)**

festivity was universal and the toasts descriptive of the happy event, which had given certainty to our liberties, empire and independence. In the evening was exhibited a very fine set of fireworks, conducted by Colonel Stevens, arranged on the point of a temple 100 feet in length and proportionately high. The temple showed 13 arches, each displaying an illuminated painting. The centre arch was ornamented with a pediment larger than the others, and the whole edifice supported by a colonnade of the Corinthian order.

The illuminated paintings were disposed in the following order: The first arch on the right represented the commencement of hostilities at Lexington, with this inscription – “The Scene opened;” Second, “British Clemency,” represented in the burning of Charleston, Falmouth, Norfolk and Kingston; Third, “The separation of America from Britain.” By your tyranny to the people of America, you have separated the wide arch of an extended empire; Fourth, “Britain represented as a decaying empire, by a barren country, broken arches, fallen spires, ships deserting its shores, birds of prey hovering over its mouldering (sic) cities, and a gloomy setting sun.” Fifth, America represented as a rising Empire, prospect of a fertile country, harbors and rivers covered with ships, new canals opening, cities rising amidst woods, splendid sun emerging from a bright horizon. Sixth, A grand illuminated representation of Louis XVI, the encourager of letters, the rights of humanity, the ally and friend of the American people; Seventh, The centre arch. The Fathers in Congress. Motto, *Nil desperandum Reipublicae*; Eighth, The American Philosopher and Ambassador, extracting lightning from the clouds; Ninth, Battle near Saratoga, October 7, 1777; Tenth, The convention of Saratoga; Eleventh, A representation of the sea fight off Ushant, between Count de Orvilliers and Admiral Keppel; Twelfth, Warren, Montgomery, Mercer, Wooster, Nash and a crowd of heroes who have fallen in the American contest, in Elysium, receiving the thanks and praises of Brutus, Cato and

those other spirits, who, in all ages, have gloriously struggled against tyrants and tyranny. Motto, “Those who shed their blood in such a cause shall live and reign forever;” Thirteenth, Represented peace, with all her train of blessings, her right hand displaying an olive branch, at her feet lay the honors of harvest, the background was filled with flourishing cities, ports crowded with ships and other elements of an extended Empire and unrestrained commerce.

When the fire works were finished the company returned to the Academy and concluded the celebration by a very splendid ball. The whole was conducted in a style and manner that reflects great honor on the task of the managers.

### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN!!**

The City of Philadelphia, PA is celebrating the 300th anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth throughout 2006. To Americans, he is best known by all for his roles as a statesman, legislator, inventor, businessman and writer, and he was a noted philanthropist. He helped establish the first hospital in Philadelphia, as well as the first fire department and public library in the colonies.

Born January 6, 1706, Franklin's family had emigrated from Oxfordshire, England in 1683. His father was a maker of soap and candles in Boston. Benjamin was one of 17 children--the 15th child and 10th son of his father.

Franklin has been called "the first civilized American", "the apostle of modern times", and even "man's unerring guide to a healthy, wealthy and happy life."

He was one of the best known and most admired men in the world during the latter half of the 18th Century and of all the founding fathers in the USA, it is agreed that Franklin would adapt himself most readily to the situations of the 21st Century.

The areas of human endeavor where Benjamin Franklin's work, thought, and interest are believed important are: education and natural sciences; international relations and public service; publishing, broadcasting and communications; science and engineering; medicine and public health; printing, advertising and graphic arts; finance, insurance, private enterprise; religion, fraternal organizations and humanities; agriculture, horticulture and botany; and, music, entertainment and special events.

## FRANKLIN (Cont'd)

### *WHAT A MAN! HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.*

A new exhibit, "Benjamin Franklin, In Search of a Better World", is on display at the National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, through April 30. It features more than 250 priceless artifacts, engaging, interactive devices and hands-on family fun.

### **14th HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR ATTRACTS 500 VISITORS**

Five hundred enthusiastic "tour-ists" enjoyed visiting six prestigious homes on Sunday December 4 during the 14th bi-annual Holiday House Tour of THSSH. The residences covered a span of 263 years and drew raves from all who attended. Many visitors personally thanked hosts and hostesses for their hospitality. Proceeds from the tour are earmarked for the ongoing restoration of the 1809 Brick Academy.

Residences included: a 1740 early settler's dwelling at 1 Chimney Ash Farm Road, Basking Ridge, home of Jerry and Marcella Miccolis; a mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century farmstead at 3219 Valley Road, Basking Ridge, residence of Warren and Lorraine Passmore; an 1830 two-story farmhouse at 2 Cherry Lane, Brookside, Mendham Township, home of Richard Mervin; an 1865 Second Empire residence at 30 East Craig Street, Basking Ridge, residence of Marc and Sara Bonnefoi; a brick English manor estate, built in 1990, owned by Robert and Kathleen Kleiber at 403 Mine Brook Road, Far Hills; and a 2002 French country house (mansion) at 6 Timber Ridge Road, Far Hills, the home of Peter and Carol Jegou.

The Brick Academy served as hospitality center throughout the day, offering refreshments and comfort. The building was decorated with holiday appointments and supplied music and cordiality.

In addition to the six homeowners who generously offered their residences for the tour THSSH expresses its appreciation to the following local businesses who contributed to the House **Tour: Bernardsville Print Center; Khore of Liberty Corner; Kings of Bernardsville; SHRY Men's Hair Salon; Tannen Group Realtors; Camelot Custom Homes; Gallaway and Crane Funeral Home; Sandra John Interiors; Wexford Custom Renovations; Daniel Lincoln, Architect; Philip Kennedy-Grant, Architect; and, Bisogno & Loeffler, Attorneys at Law.**

Special thanks to Trustee John B. Campbell, tour chairman, who orchestrated the entire event to perfection, and was readily available throughout the planning stages and the day of the tour.

## **HEADS UP ON UPCOMING TALKS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

All talks start at 7.30 pm:

Mar. 16 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Meisha Hunter</b> - "Croton Water Works- Investigating Urban Landmarks in Manhattan"
Apr. 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>George LeBoeuf</b> - "Odd Couples-Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt"
May 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Gordon Ward</b> - "Rediscovery and Inspiration along the Lewis and Clark Trail"
Sept. 21 <sup>st</sup>	<b>David Cowell</b> - "Turn Your Plate Over and Have a Good Read!"
Oct. 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Dr Hugh Evans</b> - "The President is Dead- Politics and Medicine in Wartime"
Nov. 16 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Laurie MacDonnell-Gaulke</b> - "Doughnuts for Doughboys - A Salvation Army Lassie on WW1 Battlefields"

Programs subject to change. Call Sonia Heijne on (908) 766-4591 for details.

### **MESSAGE ABOUT MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Lorraine Passmore, membership chairperson, reminds everyone that 2006 dues should be received as soon as possible to ensure continued membership. Otherwise, this will be the last THSSH newsletter received. Also, life members who do not receive membership letters are encouraged to make tax-deductible contributions to assist in the restoration of the Academy.

### ***Inside the Brick Academy***

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