



## 2018 Annual Report

### The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

Submitted by Sue Zibelli, Chairman

#### Board of Trustees

Daniel Lincoln	President, Historic Preservation & Restoration
Sue Zibelli	Board Chairman, Museum Curator
Greg Gonzalez	Treasurer
Robin Marion	Recording Secretary, Hospitality
Paula Axt	Building Maintenance, Education, Programs
Brooks Betz	Membership, Online Communications, Programs
Cynthia Crosson	Archivist
Patricia Gray	Hospitality
Florence Hallgring	Advertising
Marcella Miccolis	Affiliations, Calendar, Newsletter, Publications & Production
Margaret Skelly	Education, Programs
Lawrence Terricone	Landscape, Programs, Research Coordinator
Meg Wastie	Education, Programs

The Board of Trustees comprised of 13 volunteer members, and convened 10 times during 2018. No new Trustees were added in 2018. One Trustee resigned end of 2018.

There was one general membership meeting in 2018. General membership meetings include business updates, announcements and guest speakers.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

## Executive Summary

The primary objective of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) in 2018 was to create cultural opportunities and enrichment for the local community by providing programs and initiatives that inform, educate and foster interest in local history.

- **Elder Voices** – Somerset Hills

Long time area residents came together at the Brick Academy to reminisce and share their memories of Bernards Township and the Somerset Hills.

- **Walking Tours** – Basking Ridge

THSSH Trustees provided a tour of historic Basking Ridge.

- **Active Adults Tour** – South NJ

Members of the Active Adults of Harrison Township toured the Brick Academy.

- **Speaker Programs** – Somerset Hills

Three speaker programs were held at the Brick Academy.

- **Pop-up Collections** – Somerset Hills

Local residents were encouraged to share their personal collections in a display case at the Brick Academy.

- **1770's Lord Stirling Festival** – Somerset County Parks Commission

Brick Academy artifacts and information were on display during the festival.

- **THSSH 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** – Somerset Hills

A local business organization sponsored a community event that was held on the grounds of the Brick Academy to celebrate THSSH's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

- **Basking Ridge Tree Lighting** – Basking Ridge

Children were invited to the Brick Academy to participate in a Holiday Kids Craft activity.

- **Holiday House Tour Fundraiser** – NJ & PA

THSSH's prominent bi-annual event, the Somerset Hills Holiday House Tour, was held for the 19<sup>th</sup> year.

- **Cat's Meow Village Keepsakes Fundraiser** – Basking Ridge

Wooden collectibles representing historical landmarks were sold.

- **New Jersey Digital Highway (NJDH)** – Rutgers University

THSSH museum and archives collections were catalogued, digitized and entered into the NJDH.

- **Boudinot/Southard/Ross Estate** – Somerset County Parks Commission

Military artifacts from THSSH's collection were offered to be display during the Military History Day.

- **Research** – Nationwide

THSSH had 29 research requests in 2018 compared to 45 in 2017.

- **Museum** – Somerset Hills

The museum was open to the public first Sunday of each month (excluding holidays and inclement weather). Free museum tours were provided to educators, scout troops and other non-profit groups. Historic artifacts from THSSH collections were on display at local municipal buildings, libraries and schools; at community events; and in other partner museums.

- **Education Programs** – Bernards Township and Morristown

Bernards Township Elementary Schools and the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts (METC) sent over 200 children, chaperones and teachers to visit the Brick Academy and participate in early education programs.

- **Student Enrichment** – Bernards Township

The “Young Historians” worked on several programs and activities throughout 2018.

- **Communications** – Nationwide (membership)

Members received three newsletters and email broadcasts.

- **Website and Social Media** – Nationwide

The THSSH website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube channels were in place to communicate news and information.

- **Historic Restoration and Preservation** – Bernards Township and Peapack-Gladstone

Two major projects are underway.

- **Membership** – Nationwide

THSSH membership totaled 211. We welcomed 38 new members in 2018, down from 61 in 2017. One Lifetime member joined THSSH in 2018.

- **Donations** – Nationwide

In addition to dues paid in 2018, THSSH received \$1,755 in donations.

- **Grants** – Bernards Township and Peapack-Gladstone

THSSH managed two Somerset County grant projects throughout 2018, and is awaiting selection for an additional grant to replace worn display cases on the main floor of the Brick Academy Museum.

### **Community Outreach**

In order to provide opportunities for the community to gain an understanding of our mission, and to raise consciousness of the historical heritage of the Somerset Hills, THSSH participated in many Somerset County and Somerset Hills history-related programs.

### **Elder Voices**

Long time area residents came together in a small intimate setting at the Brick Academy for four sessions to reminisce and share their photos and memories of living in the Somerset Hills. These two-hour storytelling sessions opened the floor to questions about local places and topics, and revealed some of the untold history of the area as told from those who lived it.

### **Walking Tour**

THSSH trustees led a Walking Tour of Historical Basking Ridge that spans 250 years of Basking Ridge village history. The earliest structures on the tour date back to when the name “Baskenridge” first appeared in the records of the Presbyterian Church in 1733.

### **Active Adults Tour – South NJ**

A THSSH trustee provided a guided tour of the Brick Academy to a group of forty members of the Active Adults of Harrison Township who had travelled by bus to visit sites in the Somerset Hills.

### **Speaker Programs – Somerset Hills**

Several speaker programs were held at the Brick Academy including “What’s Cooking,” Nancy Drew mystery books, and crossword puzzle creation and solutions.

### **Pop-up Collections – Somerset Hills**

Local residents were encouraged to share their personal collections in a display case at the Brick Academy. Displayed in 2018 – Napkin rings; Nancy Drew books; crossword puzzles; WWI medals; and Christmas ornaments. A presentation by the collector was included for the Nancy Drew books, as well as the crossword puzzles.

**1770’s Lord Stirling Festival** – While recreating a typical Sunday afternoon in the 1700’s, and demonstrating New Jersey’s colonial heritage, this event promotes historical and environmental education. THSSH had a prominent position at the event where several trustees staffed our table throughout the day. Brick Academy artifacts and information on display encouraged visitors to inquire about the history of the town, and allowed our trustees to interact with people from our local community, as well as from various other New Jersey regions.

### **THSSH 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration – Somerset Hills**

The Oak Tree Networking Group, a local business organization, sponsored a community barbecue that was held on the grounds of the Brick Academy to celebrate THSSH’s 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Young Historians served as docents, and Elder Voices program participants worked as greeters. Approximately 250 guests enjoyed the food and drinks along with live music.

### **Basking Ridge Tree Lighting**

Children were invited to the Brick Academy prior to the tree lighting ceremony to participate in a Holiday Kids Craft activity. Approximately 40 children and adults participated.

### **Holiday House Tour**

This bi-annual event is the primary fundraiser for THSSH. Four private homes plus the VanDorn Mill and the Brick Academy were featured. 278 tickets were sold. 100 docents and parking guides worked the event.

### **Cat's Meow Village Keepsakes**

Wooden collectibles representing historical landmarks for sale. The collection currently consists of the Brick Academy, the Old Oak Tree, and the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church.

### **Local Organization Collaborations**

**Rutgers NJ Digital Highway (NJDH)** – We continue to upload documents and photos of museum artifacts in the NJDH.

These items will become part of Rutgers' New Jersey Digital Highway (NJDH), a digital repository that preserves the state's cultural resources and artifacts for use by current and future generations of citizens, educators, researchers and students through rigorous digitization strategies and sophisticated storage and access technologies. Resources are available and maintained 24/7 and maintained in perpetuity. THSSH joins 50 other New Jersey historical organizations participating in NJDH.

### **Archives & Research**

THSSH archives is coveted by local and distant researchers who contact THSSH via our website, phone, and mail requesting appointments to conduct local research. We had 29 requests to do research at the Brick Academy in 2018. The primary information requested was local family and house documents and pictures; historic maps; local historic figures and buildings.

### **Museum**

The Brick Academy serves as a museum of local artifacts and historical information about the towns in the Somerset Hills – Bedminster, Peapack-Gladstone, Far Hills, Bernardsville, and Bernards Township/Basking Ridge, the only one of its kind in the Somerset Hills.

The top floor, restored to an 1890s period schoolroom with an authentic potbelly stove, period schoolroom furniture, and classroom objects, is used for education programs. Along with the 1890s schoolroom display, the top floor displays a timeline of the building; poster images and biographies of important people who had once attended the Classical School of Basking Ridge, the precursor to the Brick Academy; a schoolwork display case that showcases students' work from the early 1900s; and a bobsled that was used in the township in the early 1900s.

The lower floor, which is mainly used for research and meetings, has on display late 1800/early 1900 maps of the Somerset Hills towns, artifacts from local post offices, and other notable artifacts.

The main floor displays a permanent exhibit: 'What Put Somerset Hills on the Map.' Included in the exhibit are 8" x 10" color photographs of many of the magnificent homes on the Bernardsville Mountain. THSSH has been given the rights to many of the photos for this exhibit by the Turpin Real Estate Agency. In addition to building our library with these important photos, the Museum Committee has been building relationships with many organization in the Somerset Hills, including Hamilton Farm, Trump National Golf Club, Natirar, Matheny, Meadowbrook Inventions, the USGA, the Jacobus Vanderveer House and Museum, the Farmstead Arts Center, and the Bouodinot-Southard-Ross Estate, to name a few.

In the interest of collaborating with other history organizations, the Museum Committee has provided on long-term loan to the Boudinot-Southard-Ross Estate a collection of tools and kitchen utensils for their displays during Weekend Journey through the Past.

### **Student Enrichment**

The Young Historians program continued in 2018. Local high school students work with THSSH trustees to earn community service hours. Many opportunities throughout the year allow students to earn all of their hours in one location, for one organization, simplifying the requirement process. This year the Young Historians worked with primary "Peppard House" documents donated to THSSH; they culled through and sorted materials, as well as created "theme" folders; they helped man the table at the Lord Stirling Festival; greeted visitors and assisted with tasks as needed at the BBQ event to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of THSSH, as well as at the Brick Academy during the Holiday House Tour; they assisted with crafts on the December tree lighting day; and planned, donated to, and created a holiday theme exhibit at the Brick Academy Museum. The Young Historians have many projects planned for 2019.

A Kids' Craft program was held at the Brick Academy prior to the tree lighting ceremony. Approximately 40 children and adults participated.

### **Education**

The Education Committee continues to welcome the students from all Bernards Township Schools, either using reservations through The Museum of Early Trades and Crafts, or our own teaching staff, for an education program that has young visitors 'role play' what it is like to be a student in a 1890s schoolroom. We hosted over 200 students plus chaperones and teachers from Liberty Corner and Oak Street schools.

Other education-related programs include Museum Tours, Walking Tours, and the Lime Kilns in Peapack-Gladstone.

Print publications available free of charge at the Brick Academy and community events include:

- THSSH Pamphlet – Highlights the history of the Brick Academy, the mission of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills, ongoing projects, fund raising events, museum hours, and membership information.
- Inside the Brick Academy Newsletter – Published three times a year and mailed to our membership, this newsletter comprises society news, event calendar, and local interest stories
- Volunteer Brochure – Describes the primary THSSH committees, which include Affiliate Organizations; Archives & Research; Bookstore; Building Maintenance; Clerical; Community Outreach; Education; Fund Raisers; Gardens & Grounds; Hospitality; Membership; Museum; Newsletter; Production; Public Relations; Publicity; Speaker Programs; Website/Social Media

On sale at the Brick Academy is the Around and About Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Lyons picture book, as well as other history related books.

## **Historic Preservation and Restoration**

### **Peapack Lime Kilns**

Working with several preservation consultants and the Peapack-Gladstone HPC, the Historical Society of the Somerset Hills received a grant of \$122,600 from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission in 2016. The grant award is for the restoration of the Peapack Lime Kilns, which is located at 122 Main Street in Peapack-Gladstone, and owned by THSSH. These kilns are significant for the type of stone construction, and the history of lime production and industry in New Jersey. The period of significance is 1835 to 1885. This particular lime kiln was in active use until the 1950's. The historical society has a lime bag from the original facility and other exhibits at their Brick Academy headquarters in Basking Ridge. Dennis Bertland, a renowned NJ historic preservation consultant, and John Bolt, a well-known NJ historic preservation architect, prepared the successful 2015 grant application with the assistance of Dan Lincoln, THSSH President, and Pat Delaney from the Peapack Gladstone Historic Preservation Commission (PG HPC). The property received a Certificate of Eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO) for nomination to the NJ and National Registers of Historic Places. This certificate qualified the property for historic preservation grant money. The proposed application was submitted to the 2015 Somerset County C&HC Historic Preservation Grant Program on April 24, 2015. The award was presented on October 27, 2015.

The money has been used to prepare and submit a NJ and National Register nomination application for the property. This application, submitted by Dennis Bertland, received final approval by the NJ Historic Preservation Office in 2018. The grant has also paid for mortar analysis, archaeological monitoring, and design and construction documents, all performed by John Bolt. This work is now complete. Also now completed as part of the restoration was the removal of invasive vegetation and trees; installation of clay/soil or plastic/gravel on top of kiln to prevent moisture intrusion; installation of safety barrier fencing & signs at the kiln; rust removal and repainting of exposed metal surfaces and reconstruction/stabilization and re-pointing of the historic stonework. A new interpretive sign with photographs and explanatory exhibits was designed and is now on display at the site. THSSH plans to give the finished project to the Borough of Peapack Gladstone in 2019.



## **Brick Academy Re-Roofing**

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills received an award in 2013 of \$37,600, from the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission Historic Preservation Program. THSSH's award is being used to replace the existing wood shake roof at the Brick Academy, headquarters for THSSH. The existing roof was originally installed around 1978, and needs to be replaced. John Bolt, a well-known historic preservation architect has been hired to prepare a project specification. With the assistance of our President, Dan Lincoln, this should be completed in 2019. Contact with the NJDCA will then proceed to allow advertising of the project for qualified preservation minded contractors. The project will be bid in 2019, and the re-roofing should commence in 2019.

## **Historic Preservation Lifetime Achievement Award**

THSSH Trustees voted to honor one living and two deceased persons who had contributed significantly to the preservation of history in the Somerset Hills. The names of the award winners were engraved on a brick that was laid along the Brick Academy's walkway. The "Walk of Honor" ceremony was held on Charter Day 2018, despite the cancellation of Charter Day due to heavy rain.

## **Communications**

Members receive three issues of "*Inside the Brick Academy*" newsletters, along with email broadcasts, and the annual report.

## **Website and Social Media**

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) online:

- Website: [www.thssh.org](http://www.thssh.org)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/somersethillshistory/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thssh>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/thehssh/>
- YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCilqeKdShnoR9W2EXc2qt4Q>

## **Membership**

THSSH membership totaled 211, down from 220 in 2017. We welcomed 38 new members in 2018, down from 61 in 2017, when 59 Speak Easy program guests were given a one-year free membership along with their admission to the event. One Lifetime member joined THSSH in 2018.

An annual **Membership Meeting** was held at the Brick Academy. More than 40 members attended. A Historic Preservation Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to three residents of the Somerset Hills (two posthumously) who had contributed exceptional time and work to further historical education to our community.

## **Grants**

THSSH submitted a grant application to Somerset County to replace worn display cases on the main floor of the Brick Academy Museum. The grant winners will be announced in 2019.

## **Donations**

- In addition to dues paid in 2018, THSSH received \$1,755 in donations.
- Donations and Bequests are received from current and past members and their families.
- Substantial revenue is generated through paid advertisements in the society's newsletter, as well as our bi-annual Holiday House Tour program guide.
- Gift items are sold at the Brick Academy and community events, as well as displayed on our website.
- Non-profit organizations that conduct meetings at the Brick Academy provide a contribution.
- Schoolchildren visitation, area residents, and out-of-town visitors to our museum leave donations in our donation box at the Brick Academy.

## **Brick Academy Utilization**

In addition to our museum, research room, education programs, speaker programs, and community events, the Brick Academy is utilized for:

THSSH Board of Trustees and Committees – monthly meetings

*The Northern NJ Region Porsche Club of America* – monthly meetings

*The Guard Pipes & Drums* – monthly practice sessions and bi-monthly "Pipe School"

*The Herding Group Association of New Jersey* – quarterly meetings

*The Museum of Early Trades and Crafts* – as scheduled

*Friends of the Boudinot-Southard-Ross Estate* – as scheduled (when BSR Estate is not available)

*Oak Street Networking Group* – as scheduled

## **Advocacy & Affiliations**

The Historical Society is a member of The Somerset County Historical Society, League of Historical Societies of New Jersey, and National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Preservation New Jersey

## 2019 Outlook

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills will continue to pursue its mission to acquire, conserve and share artifacts and information on matters of local historic interest; cultivate interest in local history; partake in community events; encourage the preservation of local historic resources; facilitate historic research; and preserve, operate and interpret the Brick Academy.

- To strengthen and grow the organizational structure of THSSH's Board of Trustees.
- Trustees will be actively engaging current members to volunteer on THSSH committees, as well as for programs and events.
- THSSH will maintain its image as a premier historical society through committee work.
- Programs will be offered that appeal to our members and to the community.
- Our website and social media strategy will continue to share information regarding local events and history in the Somerset Hills.
- THSSH will work toward participating in local and county grant projects, as well as growing sources of income to achieve financial independence.

Respectively submitted:

*Susan Zibelli*

Susan Zibelli, THSSH Chairman

February 5, 2019