



## 2019 Annual Report

### The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

Submitted by Sue Zibelli, Chairman

#### Board of Trustees

Pat Gray	President, Hospitality
Sue Zibelli	Chairman, Museum Curator, Online Communications
Greg Gonzalez (deceased)	Treasurer
Robin Marion (resigned)	Recording Secretary, Hospitality
Paula Axt	Building Maintenance, Education, Programs
Jonathon Booth	
Cynthia Crosson (moved)	Archivist
Sylvia Gambony	
Florence Hallgring	Advertising
Dan Lincoln	Historic Preservation & Restoration, Grants
Kate Lincoln	
Marcella Miccolis	Affiliations, Calendar, Newsletter, Publication, Production
Larry Terricone (resigned)	Landscape, Programs, Research Coordinator
Meg Wastie (resigned)	Education, Programs
Ron Zibelli	

Throughout 2019, the Board of Trustees comprised of nine active volunteer members. The Board convened eight times during 2019. In 2019, three former Trustees, and two new Trustees were appointed to the Board; one inactive Trustee was removed from the Board; one Trustee moved out of state; three Trustees resigned; and one Trustee passed away unexpectedly.

There were two general membership meetings in 2019. General membership meetings may include business updates, announcements and guest speakers.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) is the oldest historical society in the Somerset Hills and surrounding area, in existence for over 90 years. THSSH is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

## Executive Summary

The primary objective of The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills (THSSH) in 2019 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.

- **Education Programs** – Bernards Township and Madison area

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.

- **Research** – Nationwide

The Research Library at the Brick Academy was open by appointment throughout 2019. THSSH recorded 19 research requests in 2019 compared to 29 in 2018.

- **Museum** – Somerset Hills

The museum was open to the public first Sunday of each month (excluding holidays and inclement weather). The museum is open by appointment to educators and other non-profit groups. Historic artifacts from THSSH collections were also on display at the local municipal building, at community events; and in other partner museums.

- **Rotating Collections** – Somerset Hills

Historic information and artifacts were placed on rotating display by the Young Historians and Trustees. In addition, local residents are encouraged to share their personal collections in the rotating display case at the Brick Academy.

- **Charter Day** – Bernards Township

THSSH Trustees handed out information, displayed small local artifacts, and provided information regarding the history of Charter Day. The Brick Academy was open all day to showcase the history of our Somerset Hills area.

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

Demonstrating New Jersey's colonial heritage in the 1700's, this event promotes historical and environmental education. THSSH had a prominent position at the event with Brick Academy Museum artifacts and information on display. THSSH Trustees interacted with people from our local community and various other New Jersey regions, encouraging visitors to inquire about the history of the area.

- **Weekend Journey through the Past** – Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission

The Brick Academy was opened to the public during this weekend. Over 100 visitors from our local community, as well as from various other regions in New Jersey, including Essex, Morris and Union counties, were permitted to tour the museum and schoolroom, while interacting with our trustees, and learning about the unique history of our area

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

Kitchenware and farming equipment from THSSH collections remain on long-term loan to the Ross Farm.

- **Speaker Programs** – Somerset Hills

An off-site speaker program was held at the VNA Senior Wellness Center – Cruciverbalism: The Art of Solving (& Creating) Crossword Puzzles.

- **Student Enrichment** – Bernards Township

The “Young Historians” worked on several programs and activities throughout 2019, including the *ABC’s of the Somerset Hills* poster collection on display in the Brick Academy Museum.

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

THSSH museum and archives collections were catalogued, digitized and entered into 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. Resources are available and maintained 24/7 and maintained in perpetuity. THSSH joins 50 other New Jersey historical organizations participating in NJDH.

- **Communications** – Nationwide (membership)

Members received three issues of “*Inside the Brick Academy*” newsletters, along with the annual report. An updated membership directory was provided to members in 2019. In 2019, THSSH changed their letterhead to align with an updated image.

- **Website and Social Media** – Nationwide

A new website was developed for THSSH (TSHHS.org) having lost its long-standing website (THSSH.org). A Facebook page was also created as an additional method of communicating news and information through social media.

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

Two major projects were completed in 2019 – the Brick Academy roof, and the Moses Craig Lime Kilns.

- **Membership** – Nationwide

THSSH membership totaled 174. We welcomed 12 new members in 2019, down from 38 in 2018. One Lifetime member joined THSSH in 2019.

- **Donations** – Nationwide

In addition to dues paid in 2019, THSSH received \$2,135 in donations. A Gift Program was created to highlight some of the historical figures from the Basking Ridge Classical School (Brick Academy).

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

THSSH managed three Somerset County grant projects throughout 2019.

### **Local Organization Collaboration:**

- **Business Networking Group** – A local business networking group met regularly at the Brick Academy to share information that can further their businesses.
- **Porche Club** – A local social networking group met regularly at the Brick Academy.
- **Welcome to Our Neighborhood** – THSSH booklet is included in a “welcome folder” that is delivered to new residents of the Somerset Hills.

**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.

**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.

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.

**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. The primary information requested was local family and house documents and pictures; historic maps; local historic figures and buildings.

NOTE: Allowing the use of materials or supplying a “fair use” copy is not an authorization to publish.

Fees for use normally apply to corporations, partnerships, private businesses, and individuals when images are to be used in books, periodicals, films, video productions, advertising, projection, or for direct sales. This includes the display of images in public areas of commercial buildings, restaurants, galleries, the Internet, and retail spaces.

## **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 organizations 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.

## **Student Enrichment**

The Young Historians program continued in 2019. 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.

## **Historic Preservation and Restoration**

### **Moses Craig Lime Kilns, Peapack-Gladstone**

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 gave the finished project to the Borough of Peapack Gladstone in 2019 for the sale price of \$1.00.

### **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, Pat Gray, as well as Trustee Dan Lincoln, the roofing project was completed in 2019. Remaining work for 2020 includes painting and minor repairs, as well as signage.

### **Website and Social Media**

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

- Website: [www.tshhs.org](http://www.tshhs.org)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SomersetHillsHistoricalSociety/>

### **Publicity**

Promotion of THSSH and the Brick Academy appeared in The Connection and Town Planner.

### **Grants**

THSSH received a grant in 2019 from Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission to build a new website (TSHHS.org) to replace their lost website (THSSH.org).

## **Donations**

- In addition to dues paid in 2019, THSSH received \$2,135 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 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* – monthly meetings

## **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

## 2020 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.
- The Holiday House Tour is expected to be offered, as are historical walking tours.

Respectfully submitted:

*Susan Zibelli*

Susan Zibelli, THSSH Chairman

February 5, 2020