



## 2020 Annual Report

### The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

Submitted by Sue Zibelli, Chairman

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Affiliations, Calendar, Newsletter, Publications, Production

Throughout 2020, the Board of Trustees comprised of nine active volunteer members. An Advisory Trustee was appointed to the Board. The Board convened eight times during 2020.

Because of the COVID restrictions, there were no general membership meetings in 2020. 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 2020 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

Because of the COVID restrictions, Bernards Township Elementary Schools and the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts (METC) did not visit the Brick Academy to participate in early education programs.

- **Research** – Nationwide

Because of the COVID restrictions the Research Library at the Brick Academy was not open throughout 2020.

- **Museum** – Somerset Hills

Because of the COVID restrictions, the museum was not open to the public first Sunday of each month.

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

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

- **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.

- **Website and Social Media** – Nationwide

THSSH continued to communicate news and information through their website [www.tshhs.org](http://www.tshhs.org).

- **Historic Restoration and Preservation**

Exterior painting and minor repairs along the roofline of the Brick Academy were done in 2020.

- **Membership** – Nationwide

THSSH membership totaled 135. We welcomed 9 new members in 2020.

- **Donations** – Nationwide

In addition to dues paid in 2020, THSSH received \$1,878 in donations.

### **Education**

Print publications available free of charge at the Brick Academy by appointment:

- 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 is 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.

### **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/somersethills.historicalsociety/>

### **Donations**

- In addition to dues paid in 2020, THSSH received \$1,878 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 normally utilized by outside groups for their meetings and programs. Because of COVID restrictions, the building was not utilized by these groups in 2020.

### **Advocacy & Affiliations**

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

## 2021 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 18, 2021