



2022 Annual Report

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

Submitted by Sue Zibelli, Chairman

Board of Trustees

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Sue Zibelli	Chairman, Website, Social Media, Education Program
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Marcella Miccolis	Affiliations, Calendar, Newsletter, Publications
W. Barry Thomson	Research, Speaker Programs

Throughout 2022, the Board of Trustees comprised of nine active volunteer members. Two Trustees resigned on December 31st. The Board convened ten times during 2022.

There were no general membership meetings in 2022. General membership meetings are expected to resume in 2023. 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 2022 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

The popular education program for 3rd grade students was reinstated in 2022. Over 350 children from five Bernards Township elementary schools visited the Brick Academy to participate in the Early American Schoolhouse program administered by former schoolteachers. Additionally, three Ridge High School students provided volunteer hours as part of the Young Historians program.

- **Research** – Nationwide

Over 20 research requests were addressed by Trustees throughout 2022 via email. THSSH's Archivist marked and recorded donated items.

- **Museum** – Somerset Hills

The museum was open to the public the first Sunday of each month. A special exhibit was installed on the main floor of the museum - Slavery in Our Own Backyard. Out-of-print books on the history of the area were acquired for the museum bookstore from the AAUW Book Sale.

- **Communications** – Nationwide (membership)

Members received three issues of *"Inside the Brick Academy"* newsletters, along with the annual report. Primary print pieces were updated and redesigned.

- **Website and Social Media** – Nationwide

THSSH continued to communicate news and information through their website www.thssh.org. An eMail Letter was created and emailed to 584 addresses. A new Facebook page was created that has 26 followers. An Instagram page was created that has 77 followers.

- **Programs**

A documentary film on George B. Post's Grotesques, by W. Barry Thomson, was presented at the Brick Academy. A book talk and book signing event for *"Finding Kate: The Unlikely Journey of 20th Century Healthcare Advocate Kate Macy Ladd"* by Meryl Carmel was held at the Brick Academy. THSSH sponsored a narrated hike of the historic New Jersey Brigade. A speaker program *"What Made the Somerset Hills the Somerset Hills,"* was presented by Trustee, W. Barry Thomson, at the Upton Pyne Estate on the Bernardsville Mountain. A "Name the Mascot" contest was held during the Charter Day event. A special birthday party was given for long-time Trustee Florence Halgring, who turned 100 years old in 2022.

- **Advocacy**

THSSH participated in the 1770's Lord Stirling Festival and Somerset County's Weekend Journey through the Past. A THSSH Trustee was appointed lead for the 250th Anniversary of America's Independence July 4, 2026 initiative. THSSH print pieces were provided to the Somerset County 4-H Fair.

THSSH received a County History Partnership Program (CHPP) grant in the amount of \$5,000 for operating expenses from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission.

- **Historic Restoration and Preservation and Brick Academy Maintenance**

THSSH HPAC (Historic Preservation Advisory Committee) for Bernards Township worked with Bernards Township Department of Public Works to replace exterior window sills at the Brick Academy. Room darkening window shades were installed on the main floor of the museum to help protect the collections, and to improve program conditions.

- **Membership – Nationwide**

Total membership in 2022 was 165. THSSH welcomed 33 new members in 2022.

- **Donations – Nationwide**

THSSH received nearly \$8,000 in cash donations. Several artifacts were donated to the museum including an extensive, and important collection from a local family dating into the 1700s.

The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills

2022

Education

Print publications are available free of charge at the Brick Academy:

- 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 to request local research assistance. The primary information requested is local family and house documents and pictures; historic maps; local historic figures; and buildings.

THSSH received over 20 research requests that were addressed remotely by Trustees.

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.

A temporary exhibit was installed on the main floor of the museum - Slavery in Our Own Backyard. A video documentary on the Plaster Models of Grotesques for George B. Post's City College Campus, New York is available on our website.

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.

THSSH museum and archives collections are 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.

Website and Social Media

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

- Website: www.thssh.org

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/historicalsocietynj>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/historicalsocietynj/>

Donations

- Several artifacts were donated to the Museum.
- THSSH received nearly \$8,000 in donations. Donations and Bequests are received from our school programs, current and past members, and their families.
- Membership dues paid in 2022 were \$2,200.
- Revenue is generated through paid advertisements in the society's newsletter, as well as program and event ticket sales. In 2022, THSSH netted \$4,600 in event ticket sales.
- Gift items sold through our website, and at the Brick Academy and community events, amounted to \$550.
- Non-profit organizations that conduct meetings at the Brick Academy provide a contribution.
- 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.

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.

THSSH participated in the 1770's Lord Stirling Festival and Somerset County's Weekend Journey through the Past.

THSSH received a County History Partnership Program (CHPP) grant in the amount of \$5,000 for operating expenses from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission.

2023 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 growing sources of income to achieve financial independence.

Respectfully submitted:

Susan Zibelli

Susan Zibelli, THSSH Chairman

January 23, 2023