

South River HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Number 31

APRIL 2005

President's Message by Marilyn Anastasio

What a beautiful number **3,338** is! Three thousand three hundred thirty-eight happens to be the number of items that have been catalogued at our museum as of this writing.

As daunting a task as it seems, archiving artifacts related to South River's history is proceeding steadily and incrementally. Funding for this project has been forthcoming from a five thousand dollar grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.

Our artifacts chairperson, Stephanie Bartz, volunteers her precious time

to organize the project. Employed by the SRH&PS to process the items into the PastPerfect database is Maria Gostkowski. I'm sure you will all be pleased with our progress and in turn the results.

For the third season of South River "Cruise Nights" the museum will be open. Come visit us from 6 to 9 p.m. on May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18, and September 15. At the first Cruise Night, May 19th, from 7 to 8 p.m., Ken Roginski will answer questions and provide a demonstration of

how to restore antique wood furniture.

The 200th anniversary of the Old School Baptist Church building (now the South River Museum), will be celebrated this September. Plans are currently being formulated for this special event. Please mark your calendar now and plan to join us on Sunday, September 18th for this very special "Bicentennial."

Please join us on Wednesday, April 27th at 7 p.m. for the general meeting.



Feather Schwartz Foster enthusiastically spoke at the museum about her book — "*Ladies: A Conjecture of Personalities*"

Author Feather Schwartz Foster spoke at the February Meeting—

Feather Schwartz Foster presented an interesting discussion about her book "*Ladies: A Conjecture of Personalities*." She explained "After 30 years as an advertising/ public relations account executive, I am indulging my hobby as an amateur presidential historian.... My interest in presidential (and american) history has also been lifelong, and my book: "*Ladies: A Conjecture of Personalities*" allows my imagination to play with history.

Ms. Foster describes her book as "historical fiction." According to the

author, "*Ladies:...*" is a book of voices. In it, First Ladies from Martha Washington to Mamie Eisenhower tell their own stories..... in their own words and in their own styles. It crosses boundaries between fact, conjecture, and most importantly, centuries. Through inventive dialogue boxes, she allows the First Ladies to talk to each other across eternity.

Ms. Foster answered questions and autographed copies of her book.

See page 3 for an excerpt of her book!

2005 South River Historical & Preservation Society Meetings—

APRIL 27

JUNE 22

SEPT. 28

NOV. 16

PLEASE JOIN US ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27th

Dan Lieb, president of the New Jersey Historical Divers Association, Inc., a not-for-profit historical organization dedicated to the preservation of NJ shipwreck and maritime history, will speak about the many unidentified shipwrecks that lay off of our beaches, and bring their history to light. He has identified six wrecks off the New Jersey coast.

All meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and are held at the South River Museum (formerly known as the Old School Baptist Church) located at 64-66 Main Street, South River. For more information: visit www.rootsweb.com/~njsrhps/, or call us: (732) 613-3078.

**South River Historical & Preservation Society
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Donna Rafano presents Christy Fic (left) and Lauren Zdziarski (center) with tokens of appreciation for their work on the Washington Cemetery. The students completed the identification of two sections of the cemetery.

Students Complete the Washington Cemetery project—

Many thanks to Will Stoffers, Christy Fic and Lauren Zdziarski—

The Washington Monumental cemetery dates back to December 6, 1856. Over 10 years ago, Ken Roginski began a project to gather information and create a database of those buried in the cemetery. Last fall Will Stoffers, who was working towards his Boy Scout Eagle Award, along with Girls Scouts Christy Fic and Lauren Zdziarski, who were working towards their Gold Award, revived Ken's project and set-out to complete his early endeavors.

A majority of the tombstones from the 19th century are composed of marble. Due to acid rain, the inscriptions on

the tombstones are rapidly wearing away. Thanks to the students the inscriptions will not be lost. They completed a survey of over 2,950 plots, sketched details of each stone, documented the entire inscription on the tombstone, and entered the information into a database. Now future generations can contact the Society with the name of the deceased, and we will be able to search our database and provide information from the tombstone. The Society can email or send a hard copy of the inscription to the researcher.

The Society is greatly indebted to the students. We thank them for all their hard work!

Society Calendar Wins an Award—

We are proud to announce that the SRH&P Society's 2004 Calendar has won first place in the Publication Awards competition of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey! The award will be presented at the June 4th League meeting in Springfield, New Jersey.

Kudos to Doris Miller and her committee who work so hard every year

to publish such a great snapshot of South River history!

A limited quantity of the 2005 calendars are still available at Rafano & Wood, Main Street Florist, and at the Museum. The price is \$6.00.

If you have photos of South River and would consider lending them to the Society for the 2006 calendar, please call us at (732) 613-3078.

An excerpt from *Ladies: A Conjecture of Personalities* by Feather Schwartz Foster

Editor's Note: Special thanks to Feather Schwartz Foster for allowing us to publish the excerpt below.

MARY TODD LINCOLN (1818-1882)

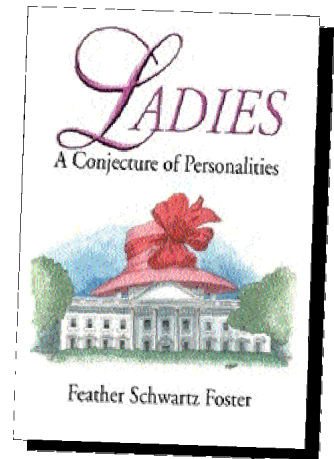
First Lady: 1861-1865

I have no secrets. How could I? Every moment of my life has been analyzed, scrutinized and criticized. More has been written about me than any First Lady except Eleanor Roosevelt. And now that Mrs. Kennedy is with us in eternity, I suppose history will have its way with her, too, poor thing. When you have a strong personality instead of a submissive, compliant one, you are bound to make enemies, and further bound to have people slant information the wrong way. There are dozens of books purporting to define my life. All of them are correct, and all of them are wrong. Like the Blind Men and the Elephant. But I thank Lucy Hayes and Caroline Harrison for this opportunity to set the record straight on several issues.

I was born into a prominent Kentucky family in December, 1818. The Todds were well known throughout the State, and counted no less a figure than Henry Clay as a close personal friend. I was a Kentucky belle, educated at a fine finishing school.

When I was twenty, I paid an extended visit to my sister in Springfield, Illinois, where I met Abraham Lincoln, among other suitors. We married in 1841, had four sons, one died as a baby. We prospered. Mr. Lincoln was elected President. We moved to the White House, fought and won a terrible War, and he was assassinated. I fell apart. Those are the true facts of my life.

Now, to correct the fallacies, the lies, the rumors and the gossip. First: I was not nearly as "plump" as people think. I had a round face and a short neck, and with those enormous hoop skirts of the 1860's, I probably looked like a bubble. I was five-foot-three inches tall, and at my very heaviest, four children notwithstanding, weighed, maybe 130 pounds. Maybe. I was short-waisted, but I had slim hips and long legs for my height. People today would say I was an "apple" rather than a "pear." Julia Grant outdid me by at least forty or fifty pounds.



Dialogue between the First Ladies:

Julia Grant: "Let us not forget that being buxom was considered a great attribute. Men preferred a soft, full feminine figure, with rounded curves and flesh."

Lucretia Garfield: "Don't forget that we were weighed with all our clothes on. I imagine all the crinolines and yards and yards of fabric probably added ten or fifteen pounds."

Frances Cleveland: "Good point! I remember how popular Lillian Russell was in my day—and she tipped the scales at over 160 pounds!"

To contact the author, write to:
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or www.authorsden.com/featherschwartzfoster. Her book is available through Amazon.com

Special Acknowledgements:

Life Members:

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Edward W. Price

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Barbara & Melvin Petersen
Patricia & Edward Pirher

Brian Racek
Rezem Funeral Home
Alexis Stashkevetch & Family
Walter Zarski

Contributions In Memory of:

(from 2/05 - 4/05)

Chris Dincuff by Joan E. Dincuff
Umberto Palo by Sy P. Palo
Elna & Edward Price
by Edward W. Price
Louis Rafano by Robert Szegeti
John Fritz by Barbara and
Melvin Petersen



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Send your application and dues payment to: **Candice Lewandoski**
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This gift is in honor of in memory of _____
Gifts will be recognized in our newsletter.

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