

HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION

Number 45

NEWS

President's Message by Dick Meyers

Journalist Mark DiIunno's *Newark Star-Ledger* column of May 20 focused on the preservation of historic Liberty Hall, filled with artifacts and documents dating back to its use as the "home of New Jersey's first elected governor, William Livingston." The structure in Elizabeth was donated last year to Kean University, which, writes DiIunno, "assures Liberty Hall will be well-maintained and cared for."

While praising the university and its plans to become an internationally recognized leader in American History education (with an emphasis on the history of New Jersey), DiIunno pans New Jersey leaders for ignoring the state's museums, archives, and historic sites. Jersey Gardens shopping mall, he points out, is "listed on the state's interactive tourism map," but Liberty Hall is not. It's about time, he concludes, that "the state starts to promote heritage tourism."

However, *Our Vanishing Past*, a recent New Jersey Public Television documentary, suggests that unless things change quickly, the state will have little left to promote. For instance, viewers heard a noted photographer of the Pinelands lament that of the hundreds of sites he'd captured on film over the past thirty years, about 80% are now gone; another interviewee, an historian with a love for the Delaware & Raritan Canal, revealed that of sixty-three homes built for workers on the Canal, only fifteen survive.

Like DiIunno, the documentary made it clear that preservation requires political support. Many states, it said, offer an Historic Tax Credit: New Jersey does not. It also stressed that ties to the past can best be maintained at the local level by developing preservation commissions, preservation ordinances, and designated historic districts: South River has none of these.

As voters, we have both the right and the responsibility to raise politicians' awareness of the crisis in historic preservation, and the changes must begin at the local level. I urge you to make your voices heard, individually and collectively contacting Mayor Eppinger and members of the Council.

South River Government Day

On May 23, third grade students from South River Elementary School and Darul Arqam School visited the South River Museum as part of their South River Government Day activities. Nearly 180 students, teachers, and chaperones in classroom size groups received an introductory tour of the museum. The tour included information about the building, monuments, collections, and cemetery. The students received a South River Museum bookmark to remember the tour.

Thanks to volunteers Kathy Bitow, Doris Miller, Ann Rafano, Elaine Sicknick, and Marilyn Anastasio, the visitors had an informative and enjoyable visit.



Students gather around Doris Miller as she introduces them to the Museum.

SOUTH RIVER HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY CALENDAR

2008 Meetings

June 25 September 24 November 19

These Wednesday night meetings will convene at 7:00 p.m. at the South River Museum (formerly known as the Old School Baptist Church/War Memorial Building), located at 64-66 Main Street, South River. The Museum is also open to the general public from 1:30 until 3:30 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month:

July 6 August 3 September 7 October 5

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Calendar - Doris Miller

Fund Raising - Joann Smith-

Goepfert and Paul Goepfert

Grants - Brian Armstrong

Historic Buildings & Sites -

Ken Roginski

Hospitality - Elaine Sicknick

Membership - JoAnn Devlin

Newsletter - Dick Meyers

Program - Ann Rafano

Publicity - Iris Schmitt

Web Site - Stephanie Bartz

Thanks For {sharing} The Memories

“Growing up in South River” was the focus of an all-women panel at the April meeting program of the South River Historical & Preservation Society.

Generous with their time, thoughts, and personal experiences, the panelists shared family backgrounds as well as reminiscences of social, occupational, recreational, educational, and financial aspects of life in South River.

Diverse ancestry was represented by our panelists: Hungarian, Polish, Danish, Italian, Norwegian, German, English, and Russian (to name a few).



Panelists (l. to r.) Elaine Sicknick, Corinne Cebula, Iris Schmitt, Carol DeVoe (standing), and Woodis Booraem.



Panelists Ann Smith (l.) and Henrietta Brasno.

Highlights of their “youth” included “mom and pop” stores; split sessions at the high school; South River as a receiving district for East Brunswick, Sayreville, Spotswood, and Old Bridge high school students; office visits and house calls; the Colonial Sweet Shoppe; roller-skating at the K of C; movies at the Capitol Theater; swimming in Dailey’s Pond and Bissett’s Pond; the Recreation Center on Whitehead Avenue; “Latin Scientific” (aka College Prep); Boyt’s drugstore/luncheonette; sandbanks; Bowling; Campbell School; shopping downtown (Greenfield’s, Robin’s, Harry’s) and in New Brunswick.

“...Memories,” continued on page 3

Special Acknowledgements:

CONTRIBUTORS (2/08 – 5/08):

Anthony & Alice Agnone

Jeanmarie Ruch

Frank & JoAnn Czapkowski

Judith G. Smith

Brian & Jennie Racek

CONTRIBUTIONS IN MEMORY OF:

William DeVoe by Candice Lewandoski

Benjamin Konopacki, Sr. by Helen Konopacki

Adeline C. Mark by Lorraine Chevalier McDonald

John & Olga O’Neill by Elaine & Peter O’Neill

Leslie Senko & Joanne Sivess by Michele, Joanne, & Steve Senko

Parents, Andrew & Edna Sicknick; sister, Winnie Starr; & husband,

Richard Whetstone by June Sicknick Whetstone

Charles A. & Pearl Sicknick by Charles E. Sicknick

The South River Historical & Preservation Society extends its sympathies to the friends and family of long-time member JoAnn Czapkowski.

The Band Played On, and On, and On....

While South River's Polish National Home on Raritan Street and Polish Falcons Nest on Ferry Street have faded into the past, during the mid-1900s they hosted many memorable wedding celebrations. Few, if any, however, would likely have measured up to the one described in *The New York Times* on August 5, 1896. The paper identified the bride and groom only as "Poles living in South River," where the festivities took place at an undisclosed location and featured substantial amounts of food and beer and an "orchestra" consisting of a violinist, an accordionist, and a harmonica player.

According to the article, the highlight of the event was the bride's method of obtaining a dowry: for one dollar, a man could dance with her and was then allowed to kiss her at the end of the dance. The bride proved to be very popular, with one guest paying for three dances and becoming angry when he wasn't allowed to buy a fourth. By the time she had collected about \$100, everyone was simply too tired to dance any more, and that, said the *Times*, was when the guests, backed by the orchestra, turned to spirited singing. In fact, the singing became so spirited that a policeman entered and demanded the festivities cease because it was Sunday and the hour was late.

This, the article reported, did not sit well with the celebrants, but the bride had a solution: they would pick up where they left off on Monday after work, and this they did, "dancing and singing until late this morning." Apparently, a good time was had by all!

"...Memories," continued from page 2

What would you add to this list?

When all was said and done, attendees could conclude:

- South River's a great place
- to live, work, and play
 - to raise a family
 - to call home.

The program was recorded and is available for viewing at the museum on the first Sunday of each month.



Panelists (l. to r.) Mary Nemeth, Betty Mayas', Joan Hoskins, and Doris Miller.

2008 SRH&PS Calendar- \$7.00
Previous years also available - \$6.00

Old School Baptist Church print by Joseph Csatari
Numbered limited edition print 13" x 15 3/4", unframed, includes brief biography of the artist and history of the Old School Baptist Church building - \$25.00

Commemorative 200th Anniversary Old School Baptist Church Medalion Ornament (South River Museum) - \$10.00

Commemorative Book in Celebration of South River's 275th Anniversary, 1720-1995
Over 90 pages of text & photos - \$10.00

Wooden Plaque of the Old School Baptist Church
Made from timber from the original portico columns - \$10.00

Old School Baptist Church Note Cards with Envelopes
Features an early photo of the OSBC;
Set of 5 cards - \$2.50
Set of 10 cards - \$4.00

SRH&PS Hat
Blue with white lettering and a picture of the Old School Baptist Church - \$5.00

Note: Prices do not include postage.

Everybody's Happy!

John Lenkey, a 1950 graduate of South River High School, had two wonderful scrapbooks detailing one of the school's golden eras in sports, 1947-1951, and he wanted to donate them to the South River Historical & Preservation Society.

The problem: John wanted to personally deliver the scrapbooks, but he lives in North Carolina. The solution: John (at left in the photo) invited Society President Dick Meyers (r.) to the Class of 1950's 58th reunion at the Ria Mar on May 22 and donated the scrapbooks there. The result: John's happy; we're happy!





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South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc.

Phone us: **732-613-3078**
Email us: **SouthRiverHistory@gmail.com**
Visit our Website: **http://www.rootsweb.com/~njsrhps/**
Visit our Museum: **See Calendar, p. 1**

2008 SRH&PS Membership Application Form

Please check one: New Renewal Gift (from _____)

Please print your name clearly as it should appear on the membership listing:

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

Check here and include a stamped, self-addressed envelope to receive a membership card.

I would like to donate an additional amount of \$_____ (Gifts will be recognized in our newsletter)

The gift is: in honor of in memory of: _____

Total amount enclosed: \$_____ Cash Check (Please make check payable to "SRH&PS, Inc.")

Send your application and dues payment to: **SRH&PS Membership**
P.O. Box 446
South River, NJ 08882

[All dues and contributions are
tax-deductible.]

ANNUAL DUES CATEGORIES

- Adult \$10.00
- Student \$5.00
- Family/Couple \$15.00
- Business/Corporate \$25.00
- Lifetime - Individual \$250.00

My company has a matching gift program.

Company name: _____

Company address: _____

As a tax-exempt corporation, the SRH&PS, Inc. is eligible to receive matching gifts. If your employer participates in such a program, please send matching gift forms with your membership donation. The Society's fiscal year is January 1 to December 31.