
HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION

Number 49

NEWS

President's Message by Brian Armstrong

Recently, I visited Rutgers University Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives, located within Alexander Library, to view the Paul A. Schack collection of photos, news clippings, artifacts, and other historical items concerning South River. The collection dates from 1895 to 1983 and is housed in four cartons and one phase box. In 1983, Mr. Schack donated to the library his own collection, along with integrated material from the collections of R. Van Dyke Reid and James B. Armstrong. The library website notes the collection is “primarily composed of press clippings, historical notes and photographs, but also includes correspondence, reports, certificates, deeds, church records, publications, maps and ephemera. The materials pertain mainly to the economic, social, political and cultural development of the community of South River, New Jersey, from the mid-1890s to the early 1980s.”

My original interest in looking at the collection was the vast number of sports photos and newspaper clippings. Eventually, I would like to include an exhibit in the museum about South River sports. But as I looked at the contents of one of the boxes, I found Schack's copy of the 1904 deed from my great grandfather's land on Upper Whitehead Avenue which he sold to the Schacks. Then I found a file containing the wonderful collection of articles about South River's efforts to fight the economic problems of the Great Depression. I spent the next hour reading the newspaper clippings from 1929 to 1938 which I plan to summarize for a future newsletter. At the end of my time at the library, I reviewed the very interesting files on the mayors of South River during the 1930s and 1940s.

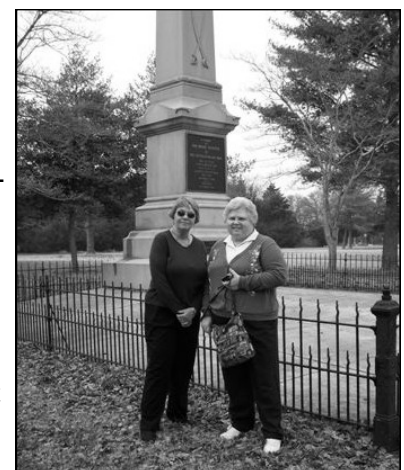
I encourage everyone with an interest in South River history to visit the library and look at this great collection. It is like opening a time capsule from the 20th century. While you are waiting for the library staff to bring the boxes from the archives, take a look at *The History of South River* by Jessie Selover, which is on the shelves in the Special Collections room. Just make sure you have enough money in the parking meter because the time will fly, and you will want to look at every piece of this collection.

The League of Historical Societies Winter Meeting

March 7 was a sunny and warm day for The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey Winter Meeting which Karen Satterthwaite, Jean Zimmerman, and Marilyn Anastasio attended. The Tuckerton Seaport Society hosted the meeting, after which there was a “Break-Beach Apparatus Drill Demonstration” on how to save people from sinking ships, a lecture on “The War at the Shore” during the Revolution, and a tour to Pulaski's Headquarters, Pulaski Monument, Tuckerton Wireless Bases, Chestnut Neck Monument, Cedar Bridge Tavern and the Manahawkin Old Baptist Church. The day was perfectly organized and enjoyable.

If you are interested, Linda Barth from the League of Historical Societies will e-mail information about activities and programs happening throughout the state. For additional information, or to be placed on the League's mailing list, visit its website, <http://www.lhsnj.org/>.

If you would like to attend the June League meeting, please contact the South River Museum. The meetings are historically entertaining and informative. The \$20 registration fee includes the activities and a delicious breakfast and lunch.



Photographer Marilyn Anastasio captures Jean Zimmerman (l.) and Karen Satterthwaite enjoying Tuckerton's spring-like weather.

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South River Historical & Preservation News

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(If you would prefer to receive your newsletter via email,
please contact us at southriverhistory@gmail.com.)

Corrections

The *South River Historical & Preservation News* willingly corrects its factual errors. If you believe we have made a mistake, please let us know (see p. 6 for contact information).

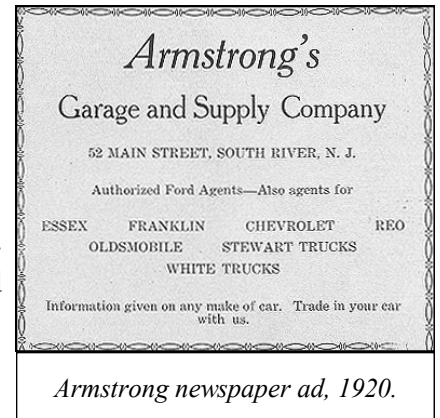
...continued from previous issue

History of Armstrong Sales Corporation

by Brian Armstrong

During the Depression, the Armstrong dealership occupied a building it owned on the corner of Main and Obert Streets. As the economy worsened, parts of it were rented to Duschock's Pharmacy and Rady Jewelry Shop, leaving just a one car showroom in the back of the building.

"That," said Harold, "is when I got involved in the business." He was about 14 years old and went in on Saturday afternoons "to keep the place open." Harold recalled a day when he and a pal, Sonny Burton, were moving a car and Sonny "ran it into the side of the wall. I had to get my Uncle Frank to bring it up to New Brunswick and fix it before my old man got back from playing golf. My name would have been mud!"



Later, the family opened its first repair shop in a building owned by the Hermann Aukman company. "One night at quitting time," Harold recounted, "the mechanic, Jules Furslew, came to my father and said 'I'm taking my tools home tonight- I think there is going to be a problem.' And sure enough that night the place went up. We lived in Sayreville at the time and I could hear the cars exploding." There were allegations of arson, but none were proven.

After the fire, the business constructed and moved into a new building on the Causeway, across from Brodsky's factory. Harold's father ran the business, and Harold worked there on Saturday afternoons until his military service during WWII.

Continued on p. 5

Panelists Promote Portuguese Pride

The mid-to-late twentieth century saw an influx of Portuguese immigrants to the area. Our February program featured a panel of members of the Portuguese community:

Alda Ferro Maltez, a substitute teacher in our public school system, and a homemaker;

Horace Ferro, owner of Tarhel Construction (who moved to South River in 1961);

Maria Santos, owner of Express Liquors (who moved here in 1969);

Rui Almeida, a systems administrator and a member of the borough Council (who moved here in 1978).

All were here to tell their stories.

Mr. Albert Ferro had been instrumental in settling relatives in South River, helping everyone (and in every way) he could. He truly was an important member of the Portuguese community, for his savvy, his friendship, his compassion, his where-withal assured both family and friends a safe, secure “home” in South River.



Sharing their stories with the audience were (l. to r.) Horace Ferro, Maria Perpetua Santos, Rui Almeida, and Alda Ferro Maltez.

From Gafanha da Boa-Hora, Aveiro, a rural farming community in Portugal, they came to the United States for reasons similar to those that other groups had (and continue to) come: to embrace economic opportunity, to escape political strife, and to be near other family members.

Here in South River, our Portuguese neighbors not only make our community a better one by their lives, occupations, and participation, but they also maintain aspects of their culture and heritage to proudly hand down from one generation to the next.

A sense of “home” (closeness to family) is an integral aspect of their culture. The Portuguese Club boasts four hundred active members; their school has fifty to sixty students enrolled; their soccer teams, disciplined and talented, are to be reckoned with. In the audience were many members of the Portuguese community who enhanced the panelists’ presentation by sharing their stories, too.

Their individual stories were touching.

Their overall influence remarkable.

Local businesses include-

Construction/ Paving:		
Alpha Contracting Co.	Ferro Construction	Star of the Sea
Andre Construction	Green Construction	Tarhel Construction
Restaurants:		
Portuguese Fisherman	11 Jackson Street	732-238-5188
Ria Mar	25 Whitehead Avenue	732-257-1100
Royal Barbecue	45 Obert Street	732-390-4409
Supermarkets:		
Cavaco’s	2 Ferry Street	732-257-0323
Express Liquors	64 Jackson Street	732-254-3200
Portuguese American Supermarket	79 Whitehead Avenue	732-254-6621
Other businesses:		
International Bakery	Gold Star Bar	Trendz Salon
Nossa Aldeia Bakery	La Femme Salon	La femme Spa

New Acquisitions, 2009 *(Materials relate to South River, NJ, unless otherwise noted)*

- 1). **SRHS report cards**, grades 9 through 11, 1929-31; **SRHS class photograph**, 1932; **SRHS diploma**, issued to Martha Wisotsky, 1932; **photographs** (digital copies), two 1950s era Order of Eastern Star installations; **Fifth grade class photograph**, William Campbell School, 1972-73. Donated by Barbara Rushworth.
- 2). **Arrowhead**, found in South River; fitted in arrow shaft for display purposes. Donated by Joseph Trygar.
- 3). **Autograph book**, Willett School Memories, 1968-1969; **map**, Master Plan – Borough of South River, 1963; **five parade photographs**, undated; **two soap box derby photographs**, undated; **photograph**, unidentified church, undated. Donated by Michael & Chris Zur.
- 4). **Photograph**, Memorial Day or other event in front of War Memorial Library, prior to 1959. Donated by David Zwolin.
- 5). **Clear glass one pint milk bottle**, embossed on side "One Pint Liquid, J.C., Joseph Chmura, South River, NJ." Donated by Darlene Gliese. [Information from donor includes notes about Chmura family: "In the 1920 census 25 yr. old Joseph Chmura lived at 307 Main St. with his wife Mary and daughter Mary and sons Sylvester & Stanley. In the 1930 census Mary Chmura was living with her daughter Mary on Old Bridge Turnpike. She was listed as a widow and neither of her sons were with her. Sylvester would have been 13 and Stanley 11 in 1930 so she must have lost almost her whole family in that 10 year period."]

Special Acknowledgements (2/09-4/09)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Anthony F. & Alice G. Agnone
Anthony & JoAnn Razzano
Jeanmarie Ruch
Charles Sicknick & Family
Barbara Westergard

CONTRIBUTIONS IN MEMORY OF:

William Bruhn by Louise Bruhn
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Benjamin Konopacki by Helen Konopacki

CONTRIBUTORS, CEMETERY CONSERVATION PROGRAM:

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Wendy Richter, in memory of Frederick J. Richter
Steve, Joanne, & Michelle Senko

Chet Zdrodowski Passes Away

Chester A. Zdrodowski, a South River institution, died on Tuesday, March 24, 2009. Born in 1918, Chet began leaving his golden imprint on his home town while still a student. He served as Class President in his Junior and Senior years at SRHS, belonged to the Honor Group, and excelled in both track and football, winning a football scholarship to Manhattan College.

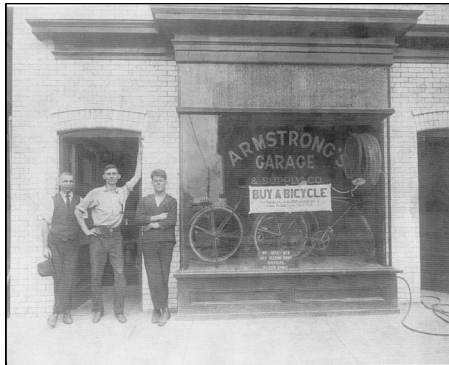
With a BA in Health and Physical Education and an MA in School Administration, Chet spent many years directing South River's recreation programs and was an educator in South River schools from 1946 until he retired in 1982, including twenty-three years as Principal of Willett School. In addition, he served as Mayor in 1964-65.

In February, 2009, well-known artist and South River native Joseph Csatari donated to the SRH&PS the light-hearted painting (r.) that Chet, "a jokester," had posed for in costume with trumpet. On display at the South River Museum, the painting is but one of the many ways Chet Zdrodowski's spirit will live on.



Armstrong, continued from p. 2

After his discharge in 1946, Harold returned, ready to play a leading role, but, he said, "in a typical Armstrong way, instead of sending me to the GM institute and learning how to become a dealer and run the place, they put me in the back with the mechanics. So my training there was terrible. It was absolutely awful." Harold discovered, though, that it mattered little because "it was a time when you didn't have to sell cars. If you owned a Chevrolet you traded on a Chevrolet; if you owned a Pontiac you traded on a Pontiac."



Armstrong's Garage, circa 1918-1919. The men on the left are unidentified.

With little to do at the dealership, Harold said he and his father began playing golf, and when his brother, Richard, "saw the way my father and I were enjoying life, he said he wanted to join the company!" Richard did join the team in 1954, and near the end of the 1960s, Harold and Richard bought the business from the older generation.

After Richard's death in 1970, Harold sold the business to Sy Tepperman, who had been a professional comic under the name Bobby Woods. Harold stayed on at full salary and was given cars for himself, his wife, and their children. "All I had to do," said Harold, "was show up once a month to see the formal cost statement. I'm telling you, it was too hard to refuse. And he was years ahead of his time. He hired people that were the typical salesmen of today." While Harold had been happy selling ten cars a month, the new owner "jumped to 25, 30, 40 cars a month. He was quite a character."

Tepperman, however, suffered a heart attack, and Harold bought back into the business as the majority stockholder. The sales manager, Mel, ran it on a day-to-day basis. "Mel," said Harold, "was a very good sales manager, but as a dealer he had problems." Harold saw that the company was rapidly going downhill, so he sold the business (but not the building, which he co-owned with Richard's widow, Cynthia) to Ray French, who had owned a used car dealership on Route 18. In the late 1970s, when French offered to buy the building, Harold and Cynthia accepted. "And that," said Harold, "was the end of it."



Harold Armstrong
Apr. 13, 1918-Nov. 6, 2008

SRH&PS GIFT SHOP

Lapel Pin - \$5.00
Collectible pin commemorating the South River Museum - Old School Baptist Church [size- 7/8 inch].



2009 SRH&PS Calendar - \$8.00
Previous years also available - \$6.00

Old School Baptist Church print by Joseph Csatari - \$25.00
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.

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 - \$10.00
Over 90 pages of text & photos.

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

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 - \$5.00
Blue with white lettering and a picture of the Old School Baptist Church.

Note: Prices do not include postage. Please visit our website (see back page) for additional items.

ATTENTION MEMBERS:
Please check your **address label** on this newsletter. If you do not find **2009** in the upper right hand corner, you have not yet paid your membership dues for 2009. You may use the membership form supplied in this newsletter or print one from the website. The SRH&PS appreciates your continued support.



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Visit our Museum: **See Calendar (insert)**
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Entering into Eternal Rest: A Wearying Proposition

Dealing with death is (no pun intended) a fact of life for those in the medical profession, but when that death occurs within the practitioner's own home, burial, too, must be dealt with. That was the lot that befell South River physician Dr. Charles Burnett, as reported in the January 12, 1900 edition of *The New York Times*.

While not a blood relative, the deceased was likely considered a member of the family, for burial took place, *The Times* reported, in the good doctor's family plot at Monumental Cemetery, South River. It seems doubtful, though, that this local news would have attracted the attention of the New York newspaper had it not been Dr. Burnett's pet dog that was interred.

The article noted that the burial "caused considerable indignation" among other plot owners at Monumental, and they demanded that the dog, a St. Bernard, be removed. *The Times*, though, said the doctor believed that "the lot belongs to him, and he can do as he likes."

In 1951, Dr. Burnett, himself, passed on, and an SRH&PS survey of gravestones in Monumental Cemetery, completed in 2005 by Girl Scouts Christy Fic and Lauren Zdziarski and Boy Scout Will Stoffers, did find Dr. Burnett's plot. But engraved on the headstone was just one name: the doctor's.

Loving the dog as he did, it seems unlikely Dr. Burnett would have been buried with his pet and not honored it with an inscription. The only certainty is that both the doctor and his St. Bernard are now lying at rest, but it is almost equally certain that they are not sharing the plot, as Dr. Burnett wished, in Monumental Cemetery.

Old School Baptist Church Cemetery Conservation Program Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP Code: _____

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Amount of donation: _____

Please make checks payable to the South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc. and send them with the form to: SRH&PS, Inc.

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(If you would like to make a memorial donation, please add the information to the back of the form.)

South River Historical & Preservation Society Calendar

2009 Meetings

April 22, June 24, September 23, November 18

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:

May 3	July 5	September 6	November 1
June 7	August 2	October 4	December 6

2009 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: _____

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Phone: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

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

Check here and include your email above if you would like to receive your newsletter via email.

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.]

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.

ANNUAL DUES CATEGORIES

Please check one:

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult	\$10.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	\$5.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/Couple	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate	\$25.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime - Individual	250.00