

HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION NEWS

President's Message by Brian Armstrong

I was at a friend's birthday party recently and I met someone who had lived in South River for a couple of years in the 1990s. I told him I was President of the South River Historical and Preservation Society and he said, "South River had a history?" I couldn't let that statement go without a response. I gave him the short version of my September 2010 meeting presentation concerning South River businesses in 1910, which was at the peak of the manufacturing era of South River. He left the party a little more informed about the borough and I hope will tell others about that South River history.



place for manufacturing. Brick from South River was used for major projects in New York City and the area including the New York Subway System. New Jersey produced 75% of the nation's hand-made machine embroidery during this time period with South River and New Brunswick plants producing the bulk. Clayton and Pierson Lumber Company and other local companies provided significant building products for homes and public buildings in the region.

Several books and newspaper articles have discussed the significant contributions of South River entrepreneurs and businesses to the state of NJ and the nation. The brick, lumber, and garment industries were very strong. The proximity of the Raritan railroad, the great clay deposits, the South River, and a population of affordable immigrant labor made it a successful

Although many years of great South River history followed, 1910 marked the peak of the borough's manufacturing strength. Manufacturing employment would also reach its largest number in the ten years that followed, with factories dominating South River business until the Great Depression. Those immigrant workers that contributed to the growth of these businesses at that time provided the foundation for their children to reach higher goals and to live the American Dream.

Chronicle the History of Your Home

At the SRH&PS June meeting, Ken Roginski and Brian Armstrong took center stage and discussed a Society project they are spearheading that encourages the borough's homeowners to collect and continuously update information about their homes, from constructing the home, to renovating a bathroom, or to planting a tree.

Ken and Brian emphasized that it matters not whether a home was built in 1890 or 1990: the current owner is part of the history of the house, and information the owner collects can prove valuable to the borough, to the owner's descendants, and to future owners. They encouraged owners to participate in the project by writing down information about their homes while it is fresh in their minds, and then looking backward in time to research former owners.

Researching a home, they said, involves more than just collecting dates that the building was constructed or that the current owner moved in: it's about life – the owner's life and the lives of others that had lived there. The presenters made it clear that strangers separated by time, who share a common bond of the same residence, are no longer strangers after the latest owner has researched them. In a pamphlet for those interested in participating, Ken and Brian write, "Researching and documenting this history can be very rewarding because it immortalizes people of the past and it immortalizes you. Wouldn't you be curious about the life of someone who lived in your house – or the life of one of your ancestors? Now is your chance to tell your story."

continued on page 2

SRH&PS 2010 EXECUTIVE BOARD

OFFICERS

Brian Armstrong
President
Anita Hermstedt
Vice President
Ann Rafano
Secretary
Hank Dziemian
Treasurer
Dick Meyers
Immediate
Past President

TRUSTEES

Stephanie Bartz
JoAnn Devlin
Kathleen Hyland
Candice Lewandoski
Lee Meyers
Rev. Michael Psenechnuk
Gary Petrie
Robert Rafano
Iris Schmitt
Robert Szegeti
Raja Waran
Nan Whitehead

COMMITTEES

Artifacts - Stephanie Bartz
Buildings & Grounds -
Ann and Bob Rafano
Calendar - Doris Miller
Fund Raising - Joann Smith-
Goepfert and Paul Goepfert
Grants - Brian Armstrong
Historic Buildings & Sites -
Ken Roginski
Hospitality -
Membership - Marilyn Anastasio
Newsletter - Dick Meyers
Program - Anita Hermstedt
Publicity - Marilyn Anastasio
Web Site - Stephanie Bartz

HONORARY TRUSTEES

Helen Armstrong (1993)
Warren Booraem (2002)
Woodis Booraem (2002)
Ann Rafano (2003)
Marilyn Anastasio (2005)
Stephanie Bartz (2007)
Dick Meyers (2008)
Doris Miller (2008)
Robert Rafano (2008)

South River Historical & Preservation News

Published five times yearly by the South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc.

Editor: Dick Meyers

Associate Editors & Contributors:

Marilyn Anastasio Candice Lewandoski
Stephanie Bartz Ann Rafano

Mailings & Distribution:

Paul & Joann Goepfert Brian Armstrong

To Our Readers:

The *South River Historical & Preservation News* willingly corrects its factual errors. If you believe we have made a mistake, please let us know.

Readers' contributions to the newsletter are welcomed. Submissions for the November 2010 issue must be received by October 15.

Please advise us if you would prefer to receive your newsletter via email.

For contact information, please see page 4.

“Chronicle...,” continued from page 1



and made available to current homeowners for updates and to those who inquire in the future.

They told those in attendance that the Society frequently gets inquiries from people trying to find information about their families, but usually has few details to provide; however, by compiling information about each home in South River, which would include the home's family history, the Society would in essence be preserving the history of South River.

The presentation made it clear that those interested in participating in the project would be responsible both for conducting their own research, using tools such as census reports and deeds, and for compiling the information with photos of their homes and families. The documents, they said, will be stored in the museum



In conclusion, Brian (photo, above) and Ken (photo, right) announced that the SRH&PS will mentor anyone who would like to participate in the project, including those who live elsewhere and would like to initiate the project in their hometowns: simply contact Ken at his website, OldHouseGuy.com.

Special Acknowledgements (6/10 – 7/10)

CONTRIBUTIONS IN MEMORY OF:

Steve Senko by Dolores Hode Steve Senko by Doris Miller
Steve Senko by Ann Smith

**The South River Historical & Preservation Society
extends its sympathies to the Rusay Family at the
passing of Edna Rusay.**

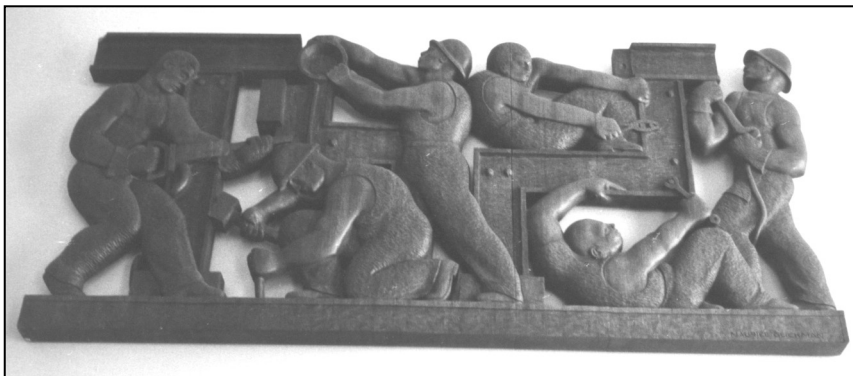
Men at Work by Stephanie Bartz

Are you familiar with the art of Maurice Glickman? If you've ever been inside the South River Post Office you probably are, whether you realize it or not.

Construction, a wooden relief sculpture created in 1943, graces the wall adjacent to the service window. It was done as part of the Federal Art Project, a component of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The Federal Art Project provided work for artists while bringing those artists and their art into communities across the United States. It ran from 1935 until 1943.

Glickman's sculpture is a typical industrial scene, part of the "social realist" artistic movement of the period. The movement was characterized by the portrayal of the working classes as heroic. *Construction* depicts six somewhat idealized construction workers at their labors.

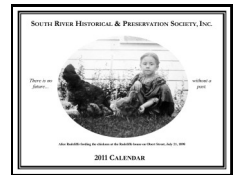
Born in Romania in 1906, Maurice Glickman lived and worked in the New York area; he died in 1981. Other works by Glickman include *Negro Mother and Child* (on display in the inner courtyard of the Interior Department in Washington, D.C.) and *Physical Changes of the Postman through the Ages* (on display in the Northampton, PA Post Office).



Maurice Glickman's *Construction*, on view at the South River Post Office.

SRH&PS GIFT SHOP

**New! 2011
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 biog-
raphy of the artist and history of the
Old School Baptist Church building.

**Commemorative 200th Anniversary
Old School Baptist Church Medal-
lion Ornament** (South River Mu-
seum) - \$10.00

**Old School Baptist Church Post-
card** – Set of 3
postcards, \$1.00
Features an 1894
photo of the OSBC
(now the South
River Museum).



**Commemorative Book Celebrating
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** - Set of 5
cards, \$2.50; set of 10 cards, \$4.00
Features an early photo of the OSBC.

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

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



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



P.O. Box 446
South River, New Jersey 08882

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 589
SOUTH RIVER, NJ
08882

South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc.

Write to us: **See mailing address, above**
Phone us: **732-613-3078**
Email us: **SouthRiverHistory@gmail.com**
Visit our Website: **<http://www.rootsweb.com/~njsrhps/>**
Visit our Museum: **See Calendar (insert)**

Yo-Ho-Ho and a Bottle of...?

Common sense dictates that the captain of a sailing vessel have good eyesight, so South River shipowner William French no doubt took into account the vision of fellow townsman Jonathan Martin when he hired Martin to pilot his schooner, the William Nice.

According to an article in the June 20, 1887 edition of the *New Brunswick Daily Times*, Martin's sharp eyes had come into play the previous day. As he was sailing the schooner up Raritan Bay, Martin spied a bottle floating along and maneuvered the craft close enough for him to pluck it from the water.

Thinking that perhaps "he had obtained a prize," Martin told the reporter that he hurriedly opened the bottle, but to his dismay, found only a slip of paper with the following message: "Yacht Ariel, off Great Beds Light. Raritan Bay, Sunday June 19, 1887, 11:40 a.m. All hands well and sober."

The schooner's skipper may have had no reason to doubt that all aboard the yacht were well, but their sobriety was another matter. The *Times* reported Martin as noting that "the bottle had contained good brandy, judging from the smell."



Great Beds Light (South Amboy), as it looks today.

Old School Baptist Church Cemetery Conservation Program Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP Code: _____

Phone (Optional): _____

Email (Optional): _____

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.**

P.O. Box 446

South River, NJ 08882

(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

2010 Meetings: September 22 November 17

September 22: Brian Armstrong will provide an overview of business in South River in 1910 using local histories, business directories, the Paul Schack collection, and Sanborn maps. He will discuss the key industries (brick, garment, hotel/saloon, and other trades) and the companies and entrepreneurs that prospered.

This, as with all Wednesday meetings, will convene at 7:00 p.m. at the South River Museum (formerly the Old School Baptist Church/War Memorial Building), 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 (second Sunday if the first is a holiday):

October 3 November 7 December 5

2010 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.

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:

Adult \$10.00

Student \$5.00

Family/Couple \$15.00

Business/Corporate \$25.00

Lifetime - Individual 250.00