

# HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION NEWS

## President's Message by Brian Armstrong

Recently, I walked around downtown South River on Main, Jackson, Washington and Ferry Streets and photographed several of the older commercial buildings on these streets. I had driven by several of these buildings many times before but had not realized many of the interesting architectural features that have survived over the years. Although many of the buildings have added siding to the painted frame exteriors, some still had interesting brick patterns and window features.

Some of the old hotels/saloons have been transformed into rooming houses (Grand Hotel, Pershing Hotel, National Hotel, Columbia Hotel, and Van Norden Hotel). The small stores and restaurants that used to be at street level for the Grand Hotel are gone and replaced with additional rooms. Other buildings show bricked up doors and windows that used to give a much different look to the exterior of the building. In spite of this, I am very thankful that these buildings have survived in an altered form and are still functional commercially in these dire economic times. Spitaleri Furniture and the Portuguese Fishermen have done a great job creating a pleasant street appearance for old commercial buildings. I only wish that the Klauser Building and the Willet House had survived the fires of the late twentieth century. These open lots seem like such tiny footprints for these lost buildings that would have added so much character to Ferry Street.



The South River Pub and El Tenampa Bar still function as bars as they have for over 50 and 100 years, respectively. The South River Pharmacy continues to serve South River as a pharmacy which it has done for over 60 years and before that an automobile dealership and a nickelodeon movie theater were located in this same building. Trygar's Hardware & Locksmith has maintained the tradition of their site as a hardware store for many years on Ferry Street. South River Florist has been a florist shop for over 60 years in same spot as well.

I hope that the new South River Master Plan will help restore the downtown commercial area of South River and revitalize these streets.

### New Acquisitions, September-December 2010

- Commemorative Book, St. Mary's Church, 1978; Record, Christmas '74 Imperial Chorus, South River, NJ. Donated by Judith Smith.
- Photograph Album, South River Woman's Club Treasured Memories. Donated by Kathryn Paprota.
- Gas mask, noncombatant gas mask for a child, World War II era; booklet, South River Fire Department, 155 years of Service, 1961; clipping file, copies of newspaper clippings relating to the South River Fire Department in 1965. Donated by Walter Schaed.
- Football uniform, worn by John (Tiger) Reckage of the Delta Pi football team, circa late 1930s-early 1940s. Donated by Ralph Meade on behalf of Frank Pajaczkowski.
- Pamphlet, "The name of Willett lives on!", ca 1975. Donated by Catherine Schickling.
- Corkscrew, Pulaski Savings; Bank, South River Savings and Loan Association. Donated by Gary Petrie.
- Photograph, Willet House, 1899. Donated by Lydia Mrozek.
- Photograph collection, Bill Denny Chapter testimonial dinner for student athletes, late 1960s; map, South River, 1960s. Donated by John O'Neill.
- Thermometer, Cost Liquor Store; pin, South River High School football player, number "43"; tie clasp, South River High School (in original box). Donated by Eleanor Onody Subjack. *Continued on Page 5*

## SRH&PS 2011 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Robert Rafano (2008)

## South River Historical & Preservation News

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

**Editor:** Raja Waran

### Associate Editors & Contributors:

Marilyn Anastasio Candice Lewandoski  
Stephanie Bartz Ann Rafano

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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 April  
2011 issue must be received by March 15.

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

**For contact information, please see back  
page**

### 2010 SRH&PS Annual Meeting

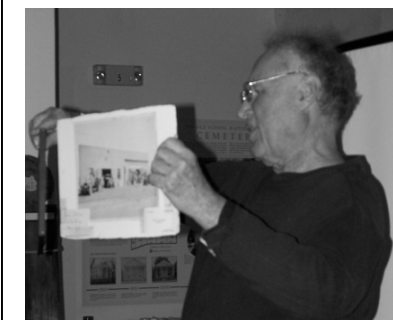
#### Snapshots

#### Cont'd from Page 6

◀ Gary Petrie displays a  
photo of the Shell gas station that  
was located on Water Street across  
from Provident Bank.

The audience listens intently to  
the show-and-tell presentations  
given by other audience members. ▶

◀ Brian accepts the CD created by An-  
drew Sandler as part of his great Eagle  
Scout project. Andrew identified and  
indexed South River articles from The  
Sentinel.



Charles Sicknick and Doris Miller  
examine his photo of a group from the South River Elks lodge. ▶



## Genealogical Inquiry

When Lou Lombardi, 74, currently living in Arizona, aspired to find out more about his grandmother's sister **Margaret Piscitelli Massiello** (shown seated right-most in this 1940's picture with Lou's grandmother and grandfather Iannucci), the late great Dick Meyers of the South River Historical and Preservation Society took on the task. Not only did Dick provide Lou census records, he also provided information that he played in the South River High School band and in a rock & roll band with a saxophonist named Frank Piscitelli, conceivably related to Lou's uncle, Tom who lived in South River.



Lou advised that Margaret and her husband Dominick were born in Durazzano, Italy in 1904 and 1902, respectively. They had five children, Mary, Victoria, Jennie, James, and Lillian and they also lived in South River, NJ as did Uncle Tom. All this was taken from the 1920 Census which also listed Dominick's occupation as "shoemaker", Grandpa Iannucci was also a shoemaker in Italy. She had a son who served in WWII and although they called him Sam, his name may have been James. After the war he had a refreshment stand by the shore or by a lake. Margaret passed in 1967, and Lou has tried to find Margaret's family. If there are any readers and/or friends who have more information on Margaret Piscitelli Massiello for Lou, or family members would like to connect with Lou, he is available for contact by email at [loulombardi@mindspring.com](mailto:loulombardi@mindspring.com).

## Special Acknowledgements, August 2010-January 2011

### **CONTRIBUTORS:**

Warren Booraem  
Woodis Booraem  
Lorraine Nisonoff  
Ken & Gloria Smutko

### **CONTRIBUTORS, CEMETERY CONSERVATION PROGRAM:**

Mary Ann Hoffman  
Elizabeth Litarowich  
Nina Silwanowicz

### **CONTRIBUTIONS IN MEMORY OF:**

Corrine Cebula by Tom & Marilyn Anastasio  
Corrine Cebula by Woodis M. Booraem  
Corrine Cebula by Stan & Candice Lewandoski  
Corrine Cebula by Bob & Ann Rafano  
William H. DeVoe by Stan & Candice Lewandoski  
Daniel L. & Evelyn Golden by Roger M. Golden  
Carl Kornacki by Donna K. Green  
Dick Meyers by Tom & Marilyn Anastasio  
Dick Meyers by Stan & Candice Lewandoski  
Dick Meyers by Bob & Ann Rafano  
Walter Mrozek, Husband by Lydia Mrozek  
Elna Rusay by Stan & Candice Lewandoski  
George Satterthwaite, Sr. by Stan & Candice Lewandoski  
Walter Schmitt by Tom & Marilyn Anastasio  
Walter Schmitt by Woodis M. Booraem  
Walter G. "Smitty" Schmitt by Stan & Candice Lewandoski  
Walter Schmitt by Bob & Ann Rafano  
My Husband, Walter by Iris Schmitt  
Phyllis Sicknick Barszcz by Charles Sicknick Family  
Alex Silwanowicz by Nina Silwanowicz  
Mildred Stults Garrigan by Myles Garrigan

## **Tanner's Corner — By Brian Armstrong**

Numerous people drive and walk by Tanner's Corner every day with no idea how the corner got its name or the history of this triangular piece of land where Main Street and Hillside Avenue meet the Old Bridge Turnpike. Today it looks like any other corner in America with a bar and convenience store and a gas station on the property. It is recognized today as much by its long term business, the Crestwood Bar and Restaurant, as it is for the house that gave the location its name in the late 1800s.

Before the 1930s, Tanner's corner had a very different look. The property was dominated by a large house that became a landmark for travelers of the turnpike from New Brunswick to Old Bridge. A map of East Brunswick in 1876 shows very few houses along the road. Tanner's Corner was known as Hardenburg Corners on the map at that time and was located before the toll on the way to Old Bridge from New Brunswick. The map shows Hardenburg Corners containing the triangle, the land near it on Old Bridge Turnpike, and the land between Cranbury and Milltown Road which may have been part of the original farm.

Major General James Morgan, was born in South Amboy in 1756 and became an officer during the Revolutionary War and later a United States Congressman (1811-1813) from New Jersey. Shortly before his death in 1822, he bought a large plot of land along Old Bridge Turnpike to add to his sizable real estate holdings in New Jersey. In his will, he divided the land between his wife, Ann Van Wickle Morgan and his five children: Charles, Catherine Ann Weatherill, Eveline Hardenbergh, Almira Tanner, and Mary Hanks.

During the 1830s and 1840s, Eveline and Frederick Hardenbergh apparently moved to the triangle piece of land and the area became known as Hardenburg Corners (not sure why the spelling changed). There is no record of this location ever serving as a tavern or business during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, its location along this highway and the size of the house must have made it a potential stopping point for weary travelers to rest themselves or their horses. Sometime during this time period, Ann Morgan moved from her house in South Amboy to live in the house with her daughter and her growing family.

After their marriage, Almira and Frederick Tanner had two children, Anna (born 1848) and Charles (born 1846) and settled in New York City. During the 1840s, Tanner began to purchase the pieces of the Hardenburg Corners plantation from Almira's mother and siblings. Tanner must have become ill in 1849 and created a trust in his older brother Lorenzo Tanner's name which contained all his real estate and assets for family expenses and the education of Tanner's two children.

After her husband's death, Almira moved to Hardenburg Corners to live with her mother, Ann Morgan, and her sister Eveline's children. The Hardenburg Corners name continued to be used as late as 1876. Sometime in the 1880s, the shift to the name Tanner's Corner occurred since Almira was the sole head of the household after the death of her mother in 1869.

In 1880, Almira was living in the house alone with two servants when her son, Charles Anson Tanner died of tuberculosis. Then in 1891, Anna Morgan Tanner Clark, wife of prominent doctor, Staats V.D. Clark, became the sole heir to the Tanner trust after her mother's death. Mrs. Clark owned and managed the property for the next 24 years. In 1915, Ann Clark sold the 160 acre farm and the "Clark homestead" to Michael Jelin, a prominent New Brunswick real estate developer. Jelin developed the land on either side of Tanners Corner on the South River side with single family homes.

By 1925 the Tanner's Corner part of the property was owned by Miecyslaw (Michael) Janowski who owned the East Brunswick Hotel on Main Street and whose son would later own the Liberty Music Hall on Whitehead Avenue. Florek Shoes ran a business in part of the house during this time period. Janowski sold the property to Charles Kolakowski in 1935. It appears that the Kolakowskis subdivided the triangle plot selling the lower portion which became a service station (McHose/Voorhees). The Tanner house was torn down sometime between 1935 and 1948.

*Continued on Page 5*

### **Tanner's Corner, Cont'd from Page 4**

After 1948, Henry and Edwin, sons of the recently deceased Charles, used the empty lot for parking that served the bar named Kolas Corner, at the East Brunswick corner of Old Bridge Turnpike and Main Street, which is currently an office building.

In 1960, the Kolakowski family opened the Crestwood Bar and Restaurant in a brick building that is a modern homage to the old Tanner house but facing Old Bridge Turnpike rather than facing Main Street like the old house. The Crestwood specialized in pizza and other family meals and was a popular hangout of teens. A picture of the old Tanner homestead was painted by Halsey R. Peterson of Perth Amboy and hung on the wall of the restaurant. The picture was modeled on a photograph taken by R. Van Dyke Reid in 1898.

Edwin and Henry Kolakowski died in 2007 and 2008, respectively. A few years ago, the Kolakowski family sold the Crestwood to Divya Insurance & Elis Sports Bar LLC. The new owners transformed the upstairs restaurant into a liquor/convenience store; and the lower hall into a bar which has karaoke and live bands. The parking lot on the Main Street side of the restaurant is where the old house used to stand. It is recognized today as much by its long term business, the Crestwood Bar and Restaurant, as it is for the house that gave the location its name in the late 1800s.

### **New Acquisitions, Sept.-Dec. 2010 Cont'd from Page 1**

- Booklet, South River High School Handbook, [1949]; book, Our Great State Papers, c1930 – Presented to Catherine I. Fabiyan by the Board of Education of the School District of South River upon completion of Grade Eight in the Public Schools, June 15, 1945. Donated by Rose McAtee.
- Scanned copies of photographs and other materials relating to the Kelch family. Donated by Betty Kelch Saloom.
- Correspondence and other memorabilia relating to the South River High School Class of 1955. Donated by George Feaster.
- Photograph, South River Road Department [n.d.]; photograph, South River Police Department, officer at bottom right – Mike Vacchio [n.d.]; photograph, large group with flags and banners for Loggia Italia No. 587 O.F.D.I. (Ordine Figli d'Italia – Order of the Sons of Italy) Iniziata L'8 Ottobre 1919, South River, NJ and “Eredeti Bonnetk... .statet Krazy..., Konyorogj Erettonk” (Hungarian group) [n.d.]. Donated by Judge Nicholas J. Stroumtsos.
- Wedding dress and veil with related photographs and documents from the 1934 marriage of Mary Zenko and Joseph Hartman at the Russian Orthodox Church, South River, NJ. Donated by Janet and Ruth Hartman.
- Booklet, Katechizm Mojej Pierwszej Komunii Swietej (My First Communion Catechism), 1943; certificate, congratulatory greetings from Third District Congressman to Elaine Gunia upon her graduation From South River High School, 1955; diploma, South River High School, Elaine Barbara Gunia, June 16, 1955. Donated by Elaine Gunia Fourman.

## **SRH&PS GIFT SHOP**

### **2011 SRH&PS**

**Calendar - \$8.00**

Previous years also available - \$6.00



**Old School Baptist Church print by Joseph Csartari - \$25.00**

Numbered limited edition print 13” x 15 ¾”, unframed, includes brief biography of the artist and history of the Old School Baptist Church building.

**Commemorative 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Old School Baptist Church Medalion Ornament** (South River Museum) - \$10.00

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



**Commemorative Book Celebrating South River's 275<sup>th</sup> 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 commemorating 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.**



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South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc.

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

### 2010 SRH&PS Annual Meeting Snapshots

Returning Trustee Nan Whitehead (left) & newly elected Trustee Ann Smith ►



◄ As part of the interactive show-and-tell section of the meeting, Ken Roginski details how this antique gas wall fixture (sconce) from the late-1800s worked with a small chain to regulate the flame.

Dan Sivilich, President of the Battlefield Restoration & Archaeological Volunteer Organization (BRAVO) gives a very informative ► presentation about the organization and its work in preserving and correctly interpreting New Jersey's past. Mr. Sivilich's Powerpoint presentation detailed their work on a section of the Monmouth Battlefield.



*More Annual Meeting photos continued on Page 2*

# Old School Baptist Church Cemetery Conservation Program Donation Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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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

**2011 Meetings: February 23 April 27 June 22**

**February 23:** Margaret Hermstedt Wright will discuss **“The Evolution of Slavery in New Jersey: from the Time of the Dutch Settlement through the American Civil War.”** Mrs. Wright is a 1985 graduate of South River High School and a 1989 graduate of the University of Dayton in Ohio. She has taught U.S. and World History at Monsignor Donovan High School in Toms River for 10 years, and is a James Madison Liberty Fellow. She expects to complete her Masters in American History in 2011.— The meeting will convene at **7:00 p.m. at the South River Museum** — Old School Baptist Church, 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): **March 6 April 3 May 1 June 5**

## 2011 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): \_\_\_\_\_

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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