

SOUTH RIVER HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION NEWS

Number 83, February 2016

Next Meeting: February 24

An encore presentation of the rediscovered film of the 1946 celebration for returning veterans of World War II will be the main event. How many familiar faces and places can you spot?

Join us at 7:00 p.m. at the South River Museum — Old School Baptist Church, 64-66 Main Street, South River. Light refreshments will be served.

Museum Hours

The South River Museum is open to the general public from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month (second Sunday if the first is a holiday):

February 7
March 6
April 3

Scholarship

The deadline for scholarship submissions is April 15. Visit the website for details.

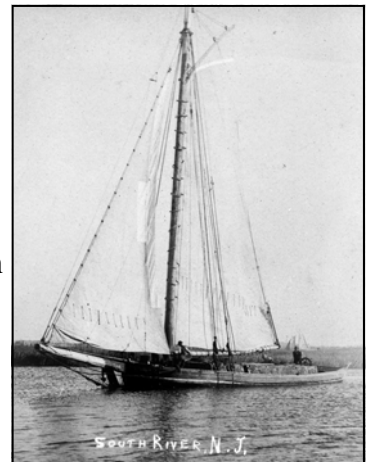
President's Message by Brian Armstrong

With Walter Wright's recent donation of a model of the sloop *Garrett I. Snedeker*, I was reminded of three important aspects of South River history. The first reminder came from the person who donated the model, the grandson of Marcus Wright, who founded the Wright Sand Company of South River in 1896. For over fifty years, Wright's business contributed to the success of the borough through the creation of jobs and economic activity. Old maps show a huge house that William Wright owned on Main Street in the late 1800s. The home that his son, Marcus, later built on the property still survives next to the former synagogue, now church. The only known photo of the original mansion is one of the lost images from the Van Dyke Reid collection owned by the South River Historical & Preservation Society.

The second reminder was the model of the sloop, one of the ships that dominated the South River in the late 1800s and early 1900s. When we see the silted marshy river today, it is hard to imagine the activity that occurred there in earlier years. Sand, clay, brick, lumber, fruit, and garment companies depended on ships to transport goods to Raritan Bay and on to other destinations. In his "History of South River," Jessie Selover recalled that "Mr. Wright's first sand shipments in 1896 were made on boats which were loaded at a dock along the South River near the mines on Upper Whitehead Avenue. The cargoes were unwashed sand for customers in New York, Brooklyn, Newark, New Haven, and other eastern cities which were easily reached by water transportation." Today only when storm flooding occurs are we reminded of the proximity of the borough to the river.

The third historical reminder was the person for whom the sloop was named. Garrett Isaac Snedeker (1807-1883) was a captain, shipbuilder, steamboat company owner, and merchant in Washington (South River). He was a prominent politician and civic leader, serving as mayor of East Brunswick and councilman for South River. He was instrumental in the founding of East Brunswick Township and helped finance the original Herrmann Aukam handkerchief factory. Snedeker's daughter, Gitty Ann, married William Wright. Walter Wright is Snedeker's great, great grandson.

Many South River Museum artifacts have multiple connections to the history of the borough. Please visit the museum and make some connections to our great history.



A sloop on the South River, late 1800s. Postcard from the collection of Donna Kornacki Green.

The South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc. was established in 1988 to preserve South River's past for future generations while furthering interest in and knowledge of the history of the borough. For more information, visit us at:

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~njsrhps/ or www.facebook.com/southriverhistory

South River Historical & Preservation News

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

Editor: Stephanie Bartz

Contributors:

Marilyn Anastasio Brian Armstrong
Stephanie Bartz Ann Rafano
Nan Whitehead

Mailings & Distribution:

Brian Armstrong
Joann Smith-Goepfert
Paul Goepfert

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 always welcomed. Submissions for the next issue must be received by March 15.

Please advise us if you would prefer to receive your newsletter via email by sending a message to southernriverhistory@gmail.com.

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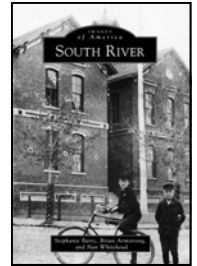
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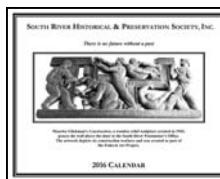
South River (Images of America) Book – \$21.99

Includes seven chapters with more than 200 photographs and descriptive captions. Published June 2015.



Medallion Ornament

Commemorating the Old School Baptist Church (now the South River Museum)
– \$10.00



2016 SRH&PS Calendar – \$8.00; 2015 and older, \$6.00 (2009 & older, 10 for 10.00)
Includes historical images with descriptive captions.

Postcards – Set of 3 postcards, \$1.00

1894 photo of the OSBC (now the South River Museum); Frazer Urn & OSBC graveyard; Main St, 1906.



Old School Baptist

Church Note Cards with Envelopes – Set of 5 cards, \$2.50; set of 10 cards, \$4.00 Features an 1894 photo of the OSBC.



Lapel Pin – \$5.00

Collectible pin commemorating the South River Museum – Old School Baptist Church [size- 7/8 inch].

Note: Prices reflect minimum donations and do not include postage. Please visit our website for additional items.

New Acquisitions, Fall 2015

- Collection of South River Knights, Little League, and Rams memorabilia; copy of a historical photograph of the museum building. Donated by Donna Rafano.
- Scrapbook of photographs from Bill Denny's retirement dinner, with newspaper clippings on local businessmen Walter Sennhauser and Otto Bohi. Donated by Phyllis Denny Marriott.
- Biographical information on Miles Garrigan (great grandfather of donor) with details of his service in the Civil War; information relating to Myles Garrigan's time as a Congressional page. Donated by Myles Garrigan.
- Hat from Ron Smithson Pontiac; mug from South River Auto Dealers Association (South River Dodge—South River AMC/Jeep/Renault—Laffin Chevrolet Oldsmobile). Donated by Rene Reuse.
- Copies of photographs of an ILGWU War Bond drive and an event attended by a group of local garment workers, circa 1944. Donated by John Kulakovich.
- Model of the hull of the 1840s era sloop Garrett Snedeker, built in Peterson's shipyard, South River; presented by Walter Kaspar to Walter Wright, 1954. Donated by Walter Wright.



Portion of a 1959 newspaper article about the death of Otto Bohi.

This and That

- *Garden State Legacy* is a free online quarterly magazine that highlights stories about the state's rich heritage. Visit www.gardenstatelegacy.com to read more about New Jersey history.
- For a lighter view of New Jersey history, and a chance to learn about unique and interesting historic sites across the state, visit *The History Girl* at www.thehistorygirl.com. In November 2015 the site featured a free drawing for a copy of *South River (Images of America)* and a guest blog written by one of the book's authors.

Special Acknowledgements

CONTRIBUTIONS

IN MEMORY OF:

Joann Czapkowski by Frank Czapkowski
 Joann Fekete Czapkowski by Louise Fitzpatrick
 Daniel & Evelyn Golden by
 Mr. & Mrs. Roger Golden
 Phyllis Sicknick Barszcz
 by Gladys & Charles Sicknick

IN HONOR OF:

My sisters: Alice Fehrer Wyatt &
 Susan Fehrer Coulson by Lois Fehrer Rao
 Ann & Bob Rafano by George E. Feaster

SCHOLARSHIP FUND:

Judy Zinis

GENERAL FUND:

Woodis M. Booraem
 Douglas E. Heine
 Joseph A. Mark
 Lillian & Leonid Surak
 Karen & Tom Palumbo
 Alexis & John Stashkevetch

By the Numbers

Ever wonder what the historical society does in a year? Here's a sampling of our statistics for 2015.

- 1 – Book published
- 1 – Historical calendar printed (26th in the series)
- 3 – Scholarships awarded
- 3 – Student volunteers
- 5 – Gravestones/monuments conserved
- 5 – Public meetings with programs
- 5 – Newsletters distributed
- 12 – Museum tours & special events
- 12 – Sunday Museum openings
- 13 – Museum work nights
- 63 – Email & Facebook queries answered
- 122 – Facebook posts (including photographs)
- 201 – Members
- 241 – *South River (Images of America)* books sold
- 250 – Museum visitors during July Cruise Night
- 324 – Artifacts cataloged (9,945 total)
- 898 – Facebook "members" (as of December 31)
- 14,471 – Website page views (177,674 total since 2007)

Scholarships available!

The Richard K. Meyers South River History Essay Contest is sponsored by the South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc. and is open to all graduating high school seniors who are residents of South River and who are planning to continue their educations.

To apply for the award, each student must submit a typed essay of no less than 1,000 words (approximately two pages, single-spaced in 12 point font) describing something that took place in South River in his or her lifetime. An event need only be of significance to the student; it need not have been a major event in South River's history.



Essays will be judged by members of the South River Historical & Preservation Society and will be added to the permanent collections at the South River Museum – Old School Baptist Church. Judging will be based solely on the quality of the essays, and all awards will be at the discretion of the judges.

Award amount: 1st place - \$500; 2nd place - \$350; 3rd place - \$150

Deadline date: April 15, 2016

Submissions must be sent both via email and in print form.

All submissions must include the applicant's full name, address, phone number, and email address, as well as school name, expected date of graduation, date of submission, and future education plans.

Email the electronic version to: southriverhistory@gmail.com

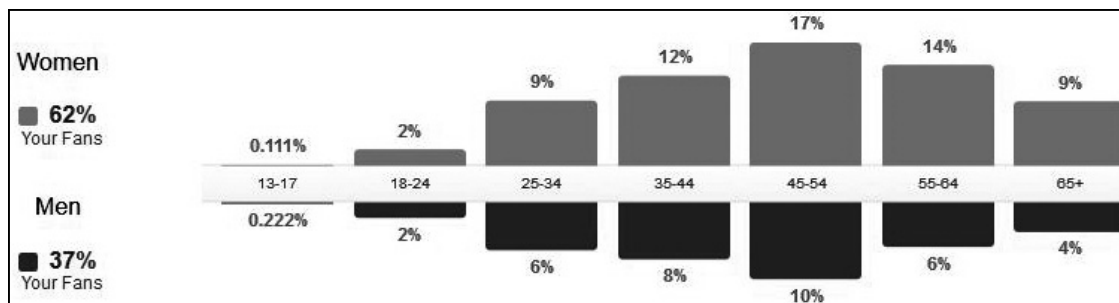
Mail the paper version to: South River History Essay Contest
South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 446
South River, NJ 08882

Previous winners: 2015—1st Place - Rebecca Baczyk, Middlesex County Vocational & Tech. High School
2nd Place - Arianna Brister, South River High School
3rd Place - Brandon Madalone, South River High School
2014—Liliya Marach, South River High School
2013—Bridget LaPlante, South River High School
Rebecca Walsh, Bishop George Ahr High School

Spotlight on Facebook—www.facebook.com/southriverhistory

As of this writing fans of the historical society's Facebook page are more than 900 strong. More interesting are the demographic characteristics of the group. While most "members" are based in the United States, others are from Canada, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico, France, Uruguay, Portugal, Italy, India, Saudi Arabia, and Belarus. Women vastly outnumber men, and more than a quarter of the 902 fans are between the ages of 45 and 54. We're not

sure what the numbers tell us, but we appreciate the opportunity to share South River history so widely. If you don't already "like" our page, stop by and see what you're missing!



Age distribution chart for fans of the Society's Facebook page (as of January 15, 2016).

The Herrmann, Aukam & Company Historic District

In October 2012 more than 70 South River homes were affected by the flooding caused by Hurricane Sandy. Seven of those homes were on Herman Street adjacent to the factory formerly owned by Herrmann, Aukam, & Company. Fast forward to July 2013, when the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office determined that the factory and surrounding area merited identification as a historic district. In the months and years that followed, representatives from the historic preservation branch of the Federal Emergency Management Agency documented the history of the factory and houses in that historic district.

Herrmann, Aukam, & Company acquired the property and the original factory building in 1882, and handkerchief production on the site began that same year. The factory was expanded in 1890 when two large additions were constructed in order to keep up with demand.



An 1896 View of the Herrmann-Aukam factory.

As part of an effort to attract skilled embroiderers from abroad, the company started construction of houses for workers in 1891. Twenty-five homes were built on Herman Street and Whitehead Avenue around the factory complex.

By 1893 the company was the subject of controversy. It was investigated by the U.S. Senate Committee on Immigration for alleged violations of labor laws. It received little more than a slap on the wrist, although the Senate Committee agreed that the company had skirted the law.

Strikes on the factory took place in 1907 and again in 1909, and a larger strike in 1917 led to riots that left two dead. A special meeting of the company directors was held in the aftermath of the riots, and the decision was made to shut down the factory and move production to Lebanon, Pennsylvania. The factory and houses were sold in 1919.



Housing for factory workers, Herman Street, circa 1898. Photograph by Richard Van Dyke Reid.

A variety of businesses have had homes in the factory since Herrmann, Aukam & Company relocated; among them were the Rutgers Cloak Company, a toy piano factory, the Dora Dress Company, the Leisure Shoe Company, the General Cigar Company, and the Liberty Cork Company. The majority of the houses were sold at public auction in 1938, and in 1969, a major fire destroyed much of the factory. The remaining portion still stands. The first demolition of a Herman Street factory house took place on November 3, 2015.



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South River Historical & Preservation Society, Inc.

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Website: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~njsrhps/>
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/southernriverhistory>
Phone: **732-613-3078** [Messages only]

If the Walls Could Talk

The Society's 2015 annual meeting, held on November 18th, showcased an assortment of memorabilia including photographs, a walking tour, and model cars that ran the gamut from a Ford Howard Johnson ice cream truck to a Cadillac limousine. Perhaps the most interesting show-and-tell item of the evening was the ashtray brought in by Linda Biernacki Grimm.



Linda Grimm tells the story of a 70 year old ashtray during the show-and-tell session at the November meeting.

The 70 year old ashtray was inscribed to Grimm's father, Zigmund Biernacki. It commemorated his service during World War II. After having been missing for more than 65 years, it was rediscovered in 2014 during a remodeling project.

Biernacki built his South River home in 1947. Little did he realize when he closed in the bathroom walls, that he was creating a tiny time capsule that would be appreciated by his family and the members of the historical society so many years later.

Have you renewed your membership for 2016?

If you haven't already sent in your membership dues for 2016, please consider sending them in now. Your support will help the Society to continue its efforts to preserve and promote South River's rich history.

Check the mailing label on this newsletter to find out when your current membership expires. If you're receiving your newsletter via email, contact us at southernriverhistory@gmail.com and we'll check our records to tell you when your membership expires.

You can renew, or submit a new membership for yourself or a friend, using the form supplied in this newsletter, or you can print a form from the website.

The SRH&PS appreciates your continued support. All dues and donations are tax deductible. Thank you!

2016 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 to receive your newsletter via email.

I would like to make an additional donation:

\$ _____ in honor of in memory of: _____

\$ _____ Scholarship Fund

\$ _____ Old School Baptist Church Cemetery Conservation Program

\$ _____ General Fund

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

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

All dues and donations are tax-deductible.
Donations will be recognized in our newsletter.

ANNUAL DUES CATEGORIES

Please check one:

Adult \$10.00

Student \$5.00

Family/Couple \$15.00

(please enter number in family) _____

Business/Corporate \$25.00

Lifetime - Individual \$250.00

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Company name/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 a matching gift form with your membership donation and form. The Society's fiscal year is January 1 to December 31.

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Phone: (Optional) _____ E-mail: (Optional) _____

\$ _____ in honor of in memory of: _____

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

Send your donation form and payment to: **SRH&PS, Inc.**
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