

SOUTH RIVER HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION NEWS

Number 104, June 2020

Next Meeting

The meeting and program originally scheduled for June 24th have been cancelled in order to keep everyone safe and comply with state mandates. We hope to resume our regular program schedule in the fall.

Museum Hours

The regular June museum opening has been cancelled. Hours for the remainder of the year will be reviewed on a month-by-month basis. The tentative schedule for the rest of the year is below.

Circumstances permitting, the South River Museum will be open to the general public from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the first Sunday of each month.

July 5
August 2
September 6
October 4
November 1
December 6

Please check the website for updates.

President's Message — by Nan Whitehead

My intention in January was for this June message to be a review of the events and celebrations of South River's 300th Anniversary so far. Then I was going to move forward and talk about the events planned for the rest of the year. Life changes very quickly and this was not to be.

My interest turned to the "Spanish" flu pandemic of 1918. I started reading about the happenings of that time along with the parallels to present day. I've also come to understand in more detail that there have been other viruses along the way that I haven't thought about at all until now.

The Spanish flu did not originate in Spain. It was most likely given that name because of events during World War I. Countries involved in that war suppressed news about the extent of the flu so as not to show weakness to the enemy. Because Spain was neutral at the time, it was open about the effects of the flu there. The world gained the negative impression that Spain had the most cases and that the virus originated there.

The 1918 flu virus was more deadly than others before. It struck the young and healthy, most deadly to those between the ages of 20 and 35. Contrarily, today's virus is most dangerous to the elderly, but also affects younger people.

The first person in New Jersey to develop the flu was a soldier at Fort Dix who had just returned from fighting in the war in Europe. The disease raged on and became widespread throughout New Jersey. In a three day period in the fall of 1918, more than 2,000 new cases evolved. At that point, our state banned all public gatherings. In one city, it tried to start an awareness campaign by sending pamphlets to every home. Vaccines had not been developed yet, so the ways of fighting back were similar to ours, washing hands, quarantine, no public gatherings, and disinfectants. Many tried home remedies such as eating raw onions, whiskey, coffee, keeping a potato in their pocket, or wearing a bag of camphor around their neck, with no helpful results. We are fortunate today to have antibiotics, vaccines, and anti-viral drugs.

One of the symptoms I read about was that patients would start turning blue and sometimes the color was so strong that it was difficult to tell their true skin color. There was much speculation about the 1918 pandemic and how a rapidly mutating virus slowly became a less lethal strain. This gives me hope.

The Spanish flu of 1918 killed many millions of people around the world. It became a part of everyone's life just as today's virus has done. Adults wore masks and children skipped rope to this rhyme:

I had a little bird — Its name was Enza
I opened a window — And in-flu-enza [author unknown]

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: southriverhistory.org or www.facebook.com/southriverhistory.

South River Historical & Preservation News

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To Our Readers:

The *South River Historical & Preservation News* will-
ingly 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 August 10.

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

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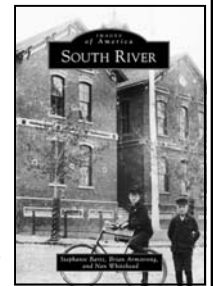
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SRH&PS GIFT SHOP

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

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



Postcards – Set of 3,

\$1.00 — Old School Baptist Church, 1894; Main St., 1906; and Frazee Urn & Old School Baptist graveyard.

Tote Bag – \$4.00



Historical Calendar, 2020

– \$8.00 — Features historic images and captions.

Photographic Reproduction of an 1882 Edward Lange Painting of Klauser's South River

Hotel and the Riverfront – \$15.00 [11"x 17" unframed]

Medallion Ornament Memorializing the Old School Baptist Church (now South River Museum) – \$10.00

Old School Baptist Church Note Cards with Envelopes – Set of 5, \$2.50; set of 10, \$4.00 — Features an 1894 photograph of the church.

Lapel Pin – \$5.00 — Collectible pin commemorating the South River Museum [7/8 inch].

Note: Prices reflect minimum donations and do not include postage. Please contact us by email or visit our website for additional items and information.

New Acquisitions

- Bedspread crocheted by Anna Schmidt Ely in 1934 for her daughter, Marguerite Ely Barkeley, wife of Orville Barkeley; oval framed portraits of a woman and an infant presumed to be of members of the Barkeley family, undated, but likely 1800s. Donated by Susan Aduato on behalf of Dorothy M. Barkeley.
- Photograph of the Lincoln School's 8th grade class, 1946 (2 copies), some names identified. Donated by Leah Huddleston. (See photograph on page 8.)
- Window decal, South River High School Maroons; 1973 calendar/thermometer, Central Jersey Bank and Trust Company; money deposit bag, Jamesburg Office, The First National Bank, South River, NJ; patch, South River High School; South River High School spirit cards, Beat Spotswood and Beat Metuchen, undated; leaflet, Union Jack Lounge, "the in place to be where the action is!" 51 Main Street, 1981; programs, Annual Commencement South River High School, 1982 and 1983. Donated by Ken Roginski.



Special Acknowledgements

CONTRIBUTIONS

In Memory of:

Caroline Boden, infant born to my grandparents. She lived 16 weeks and is buried in Washington Monumental Cemetery.

By Caroline B. Devlin

Rudolf & Karen Hansen, my grandparents who owned Hansen's Home Bakery at 50 Main Street from about 1905 to 1940.

By Donald Dermit Hansen

Albert Krempecki by Stella Gumino
The McIlvaine Family by

Karen & Richard Satterthwaite

Lydia Mrozek by Ann Wolan Cygan

Charles & Ella Szarka by

Barbara Szarka Lindsay

General Fund:

Charles & Gladys Sicknick

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300th Anniversary:

The Arthur C. Eppinger Family

Donald Dermit Hansen

Karen & Richard Satterthwaite

John & Alexis Stashkevetch

Mary Timko

During this time when the museum is closed and our meetings, programs, and other events have all been cancelled or postponed, the South River Historical & Preservation Society is especially appreciative of your continued interest and ongoing support for the society and the South River Museum.

We continue to plan for future activities, including the celebration of South River's 300th anniversary. We hope to see you soon.

Is your membership up to date?

It's not too late to send in your membership dues for 2020. We rely on your support to fulfill our mission of preserving and promoting South River's rich history.

You can renew, or submit a new membership for yourself or a friend, using the form included in this newsletter. Membership forms can also be downloaded from the website.

Before sending in a renewal, please contact us by email at southernriverhistory@gmail.com or check the mailing label on this newsletter to find out when your current membership expires.

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

History Videos

The society created and posted its first video on South River history in early May. "South River's Borough Hall" represents the first in what we hope will be an ongoing series about places, events, and other aspects of borough history.

You can see the video on the society's new Youtube channel. Visit us at tinyurl.com/y7ldltpc.

We'd love to hear from you about topics that you'd like to see included in the series. You can contact us by email or on Facebook.

Reflections on Everyday Life in South River During the COVID-19 Pandemic — by Traci Mosser Alai, May 10, 2020

It is clear to all of us that we are living through an important and historic time. History is not just about the movers and shakers and newsmakers. It's also about the experiences of ordinary people. Here are some of my observations. We hope you will share yours, too.

January 2020: I first hear about the “novel coronavirus outbreak” in Wuhan, China.

February 3: The American International Toy Fair, a trade show which I'm scheduled to attend later in the month at the Javits Center in New York City, announces it is canceling its China Pavilion since attendees from that country are now subject to a U.S. travel ban.

February 13-15: Knocked flat on my back by what I assume is the flu, despite having gotten a flu shot back in October. Mild fever. Incapacitating fatigue. Chills and body aches. My husband, Jack, comes down with it a day after me and suffers worse. He had not gotten a flu shot. At the time, we don't really wonder if this is related to what we are hearing in the news. Later we will.

February 22-24: I work the Melissa & Doug booth at Toy Fair. Handshake greetings happen, but are noticeably on the decline. I don't see any hug-and-kiss hellos. Hand sanitizer is everywhere. I spot two or three people wearing masks.

Early March: It is clear something big is happening. My company's office in Wilton, Connecticut, is making plans for remote working. I am lucky to already work from home four days a week so I am all set up. Business as usual for me.

March 9: Gov. Murphy declares state of emergency and a public health emergency.

March 10: South River School District emails us with their plans for remote learning should schools close. For my 4th-grader, it's a mix of assignments delivered by Google Classroom, i-Ready (an online learning and assessment platform), and paper packets (for kids without Internet access).

March 11: It's getting real. The NBA suspends its season. Celebrities Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson announce they have tested positive for the virus in Australia. We are informed South River schools will be closed Thursday, March 12 “due to a recently identified case of COVID-19 in the surrounding area.” A snow day is used and there will be no instruction.

March 13: My 10-year-old goes to school. There's chatter on Facebook that some parents are keeping their kids home. Though it hasn't been announced yet, there's a widespread understanding that this will be the last day kids are in school. It's a chance for paper packets of assignments to be handed out to kids without access to digital devices and also food bags for children in the free or reduced lunch program. (Later, the district will provide devices to those who need them, and Comcast will offer free wi-fi for 60 days. Food pick-ups will be coordinated for children in the district.)

March 16: Schools close, standardized testing is postponed. Gov. Murphy orders bars, restaurants, and cinemas shut down.

March 21: All non-essential businesses in the state are closed.

The Lost Weeks: These next few weeks run together in my mind. The sameness. The sadness. The surrealness. It's hard to remember what day it is. Life feels like a pendulum swinging from one extreme to the other. I don't sleep. Or I sleep too much and have vivid dreams. I feel incredibly blessed to still have a job. And saddened that so many do not. I am moved to tears when I think about how this is the most time I will ever spend with my kids. A moment later I am screaming at them about who knows what. I recognize the value of a slowed-down pace. Yet I can't bring myself to delete the Little League games and workbond snack bar shifts in my calendar.

The days are punctuated by the daily NIXLE alert that comes over the phone from South River Police reporting the number of residents who tested positive for the virus. Each day the numbers grow. Each day the same argument on Facebook: “Where were these people? Which businesses did they frequent? What neighborhoods do they live in?” “How does knowing that help

Reflections — *continued from page 4*

you? It's a privacy issue. Lay off." "That's a high number for a small town." "Actually, we're not that small a town." And on and on.

We learn about Zoom meetings and Google Meet and WebEx and quickly realize this video conferencing technology can be used to connect distant relatives and friends next door. Suddenly, people who weren't the most tech-savvy are figuring it out. The need for human connection is a great motivator.

I organize a virtual meeting of our River Rats Beer Club, an informal group of South River neighbors and former neighbors, family, and friends. It's BYOB, of course. The theme? Your quarantine beer — something you wouldn't mind drinking for an extended period. Jack and I drink Coastal Evacuation IPA from Cape May Brewing Co. Thank God the liquor stores are still open. It's interesting to hear from our former neighbors who now live in North Carolina and Georgia. As we go around the Zoom grid sharing our updates, it's clear they are a week or two behind us in their experience of the pandemic.

While these virtual conferences are essential. They're also exhausting. Speaking of exhausting, remote learning seems to have given everyone a new appreciation for teachers. It's announced that for grades 3-8 a "pass/no pass" grading system will apply for the third marking period. This move elicits outrage from some, relief from others, and a "whatever" shrug from me. On May 4, we will get word the schools will remain closed for the 2019-20 school year.

Spotlight Dance Academy, the studio on Whitehead Avenue where my 4-year-old takes a weekly class, is quick to offer virtual instruction. It's tricky with this age group, but it gives us something to look forward to and the teachers do an amazing job of figuring out ways to creatively engage the kids. They organize a "toilet paper challenge" where the students are asked to film themselves catching a roll of toilet paper thrown to them, doing a little dance, and tossing it to the side. The clips are stitched together and set to music. It's adorable.

Living on Main Street, we are used to seeing a lot of activity. Now there are more walkers and bikers. More families out for a stroll. I make my son a deal: he can ride his bike anywhere in town as long as he keeps away from people.

I take a walk along a street near Dailey's Pond. The park, playground, and recreation areas are officially closed so I am surprised to see a group of teens playing basketball. Before I even have a chance to think about whether I should say something to them, a South River police car rolls up and the officer gets on his P.A. system to tell them they must disperse. They follow his orders.

Every 10 days or so, we order dinner from a local restaurant. River Thai. Then Krakowiak. Villagio's. "Contactless delivery" becomes a thing. Next up is Ria Mar, The Fisherman, and Campozino's. Will it help? Can restaurants survive?

On April 4, we gather at 4 p.m. in our living room to watch Father Damian from Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church present a streaming Palm Sunday Mass via Facebook Live. It's nice to see names you recognize pop up on the screen as people start to virtually congregate.

On Tuesday, April 7, I "attend" my first virtual wedding. It's a beautiful evening with a spectacular sunset so I set up my tablet on the picnic table on the patio and watch as the ceremony unfolds in a backyard on Old Bridge Turnpike in South River. Music plays. The guests, sitting in their homes all over the world, are on mute. "Alone together" is a phrase you hear a lot these days. I always cry at weddings, but this one is especially moving. Maybe it's the ring-bearer dog?

Speaking of celebrations, "birthday parades" are now a thing. At an appointed time, cars roll past the birthday celebrant's home, honking horns, blasting music, and waving signs.

South River Library offers a virtual yoga class. I try it and like it. The instructor tells us we can keep our device cameras turned on or off, though she notes she won't be able to correct our form if we turn it off. I turn it off and feel a little freer.

Jack has been doing the grocery shopping. He institutes a cleaning regimen that involves bringing in the groceries, washing his hands, then back-tracking and using a Clorox wipe to clean

Reflections — *continued from page 5*

door knobs, gate latches, and car parts he touched. Then more hand washing. For weeks there was no toilet paper to be found. Finally, he snags some, and I tell him he's my hero. He reports back on plexiglass shields installed at each register. Duct tape on the floor to indicate 6-foot distances. Mask-wearing becomes more the norm, then a requirement for entry. Occasionally, he tries to nudge me out into the world to do the shopping. I try it once or twice, but don't like it. It's not so much a fear of getting the virus. I think my reluctance is about the sadness I feel when I see the new reality. But these essential workers and first responders and health workers are out here and they are our heroes. How do we show the gratitude and the smiles behind our masks? I'm working on "smiling" with my eyes and voice.

On the first weekend in May, sunny and beautiful, parks and beaches are reopened with a warning to observe social distancing measures. On my walk to Dailey's Pond, I notice how incredible the world smells. Does it always smell this sublime? Is it that there are fewer cars on the road, the rainy spring, or that I finally have the time to "stop and smell the flowers"?

The daily local coronavirus case reports have become weekly reports. As of May 9, South River has a total of 234 cases and 6 deaths. I look at the illustrated image of the coronavirus that accompanies so many news stories and am struck by its odd, unexpected beauty, a silver and red spiky orb that resembles some sort of sophisticated Christmas ornament. I remember that today is the South River Police "Cram the Cruiser" event to benefit the borough's food bank. I fill some bags from my pantry and head downtown, remembering to grab my mask on the way out.

Want to share your COVID-19 stories, pictures, or videos? You can send them to us by email at southernriverhistory@gmail.com; mail them to us at P.O. Box 446, South River, NJ; or share them on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/southernriverhistory>. We'll do our best to preserve these pieces of history for future generations.

Memories Shared

We love to hear from you! We get emails, Facebook messages, and an occasional letter with questions about South River history, but also with information about South River history. This image was shared with us by Reverend Fredric "Rick" A. Freese, Sr.

The photograph shows the members of the 4-H horse club at the Middlesex County Fairgrounds in 1957. Reverend Freese tells us that the 4-H Rough Riders was the first 4-H horse club in Middlesex County (about 1956-57). The club met at Kuberski's Stables on Whitehead Avenue. Most of the members rode together on Saturdays on the trails behind Washington Monumental Cemetery. The same trails were used by Kuberski's Stables for trail riding. Regrettably, the club was short lived.

The successor to the Rough Riders was the 4-H Trail Riders club that was led by Marge and Don Lake. It was based at Money Sunk Stables on Dunham's Corner Road in East Brunswick.

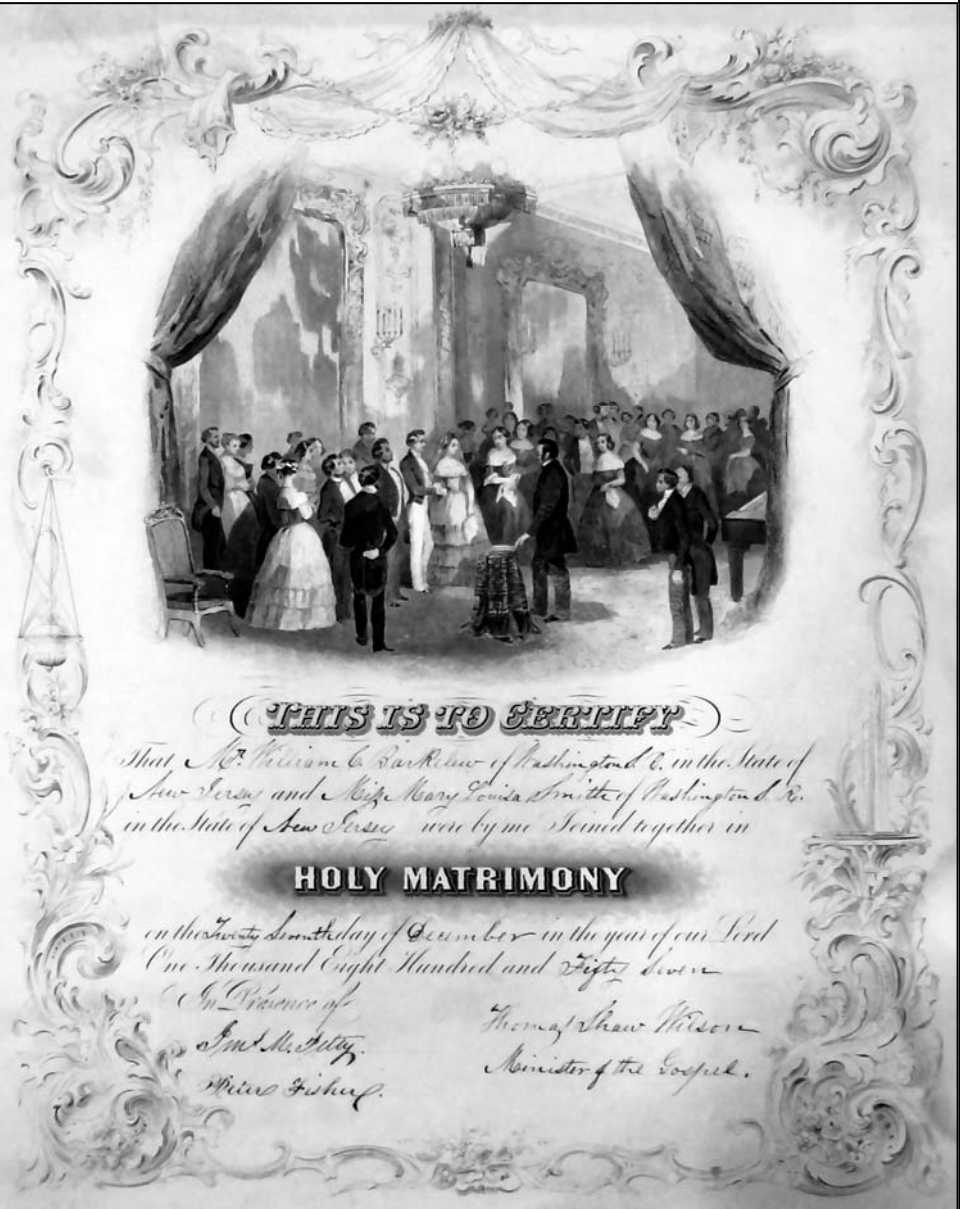
Can you provide any of the missing names? Are you one of them?



Left to right: Kathy Freese (standing); Rick Freese (mounted); [unknown]; Sandy Pawlowski (mounted); Lillian Dawson (mounted); Leo Kuberski (standing); Adelaide Dawson (mounted); Lynn Fry (mounted); [unknown]; Peter F. Martens, Middlesex County 4-H Club Agent (standing); Lenny Kuberski (mounted); [unknown]; [unknown].

Treasures from the Archives — The Barkelew Collection

It was late in 2019 when the society was contacted by Dorothy Barkelew, via a friend who holds her Power of Attorney, regarding a group of artifacts she wanted to pass on for the museum collections. Over the course of the next several months, the society received a collection of family treasures, lovingly cared for and well documented, every museum's dream donation.



Above: Marriage certificate of William C. Barkelew and Mary Louisa Smith. At left, top to bottom: Engraving from a hand-forged pewter plate dated 1778, sampler created by Mary Louisa Smith at age 7, quilt started by Ann Smith in 1851 and completed by Ann Smith and Stephen Smith in 1854, and a photographic portrait of Orville S. Barkelew.

The donated items range from a pewter plate dated 1778 to a crocheted bedspread completed in 1934. The donation chronicles a bit of the history of South River's Barkelew family.

The elaborate marriage certificate shown above certifies that Mr. William C. Barkelew of Washington S.R. and Miss Mary Louisa Smith of Washington S.R. were joined together in Holy Matrimony on the Twenty-Seventh day of December in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty Seven by Thomas Shaw Wilson, Minister of the Gospel.

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- \$ _____ Scholarship Fund
- \$ _____ Old School Baptist Church Cemetery Conservation Program
- \$ _____ Doughboy/Monument Maintenance Fund
- \$ _____ General Fund

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

Send your application and payment to: **SRH&PS Membership**
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South River, NJ 08882

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Donations will be recognized in our newsletter.

My company has a matching gift program.

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SRH&PS Donation Form

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