



Historical Society of Stillwater Township Newsletter

www.HistoricStillwater.org

April/May, 2010

From the President's Desk

Bob Grabowsky, President

The Historical Society of Stillwater Township definitely finished 2009 on a high note. On December 9, the Grist Mill was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Reg #09000653). Our thanks to all who helped in this achievement, not just within the Historical Society, but also those in the community at large whose support made this possible. The Grist Mill is owned by the State and is under the management of Swartswood State Park. We are in discussions with the State regarding HSST taking responsibility for the site so we can ensure the Grist Mill receives the high-quality preservation care it deserves.

Our top priority for this year is to merge the Historical Society with the Neighborhood House. The two organizations agree in principle that, by uniting the groups, we can accomplish more in the way of education, community outreach and preservation than as separate entities. We have appointed an HSST committee to work with the Neighborhood House on this project. We will keep you updated as the project progresses.

Also in 2010, we will be adding more historical content to our meetings and activities. Towards this end, in February, the Historical Society had a joint meeting with the Sussex County Historical Society. We plan to have more joint meetings with other local history societies. We will be participating in the Sussex County History Day at Sussex County Community College on May 1.

In this Issue:

2010 Calendar

Museum Matters

Oral History Corner: Alexander McCord

Christmas Open House

And much more...

In terms of programs at our meetings, we have already booked two educational programs for the year, with a goal to hold a total of five programs in 2010. The Fall Festival committee has already been hard at work on the entertainment and vendors for the festival.

With so much on our agenda for this year, we are still in need of volunteers on many committees. It is not necessary to make a long term commitment. The committees all have one or two chairpersons. However, the chairs cannot accomplish their goals on their own. Any help you can offer them, even a few hours here and there, will help.

According to a Native American proverb: "We will be known forever by the tracks we leave."

2010 Calendar

Apr 8 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Town Hall

Apr 24 - Stillwater Clean Up Day (volunteers needed)

May 1 - Sussex County History Day at SCCC (volunteers needed, please call Bob Grabowsky, 973-903-3244)

May 13 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Museum - David Messineo, presenting "World War I and World War II in Poetry"

June 6 - Museum Summer Openings Begin, Sun 2pm to 4pm

June 10 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm at the Museum - Special Program TBA

June 13 - Strawberry Festival - 1pm to 4pm at Museum (2nd Sun)

July 8 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm at the Museum

July 17 - Stillwater Garage Sale Day (tentative) - Museum open

Aug 12 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Museum

Aug 15 - Peach Festival - 1pm to 4pm at Museum (3rd Sun)

Aug 29 - Museum Final Summer Opening Sun 2pm to 4pm

Sep 9 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Museum - Special Program TBA

Sep 25 - Fall Festival, Sat 11am to 4pm at Elementary School

Oct 14 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Museum - Special Program TBA

Nov 11 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Museum - Deborah Drumm, speaking on "Historical Uses of Herbs for Medicinal Purposes"

Dec 5 - Christmas Open House - from 1pm to 4pm (1st Sun)

Dec 9 - Membership Meeting, Thurs at 7:30pm, at the Museum

Historical Society of Stillwater Township

**PO Box 238
900 Main Street
Stillwater, New Jersey,**

Board of Directors

President:

Bob Grabowsky, 973-903-3244

Vice President:

Dennis Pegg, 973-383-1057

Treasurer:

Maureen Block, 973-948-5789

Recording Secretary:

Betty English, 973-383-5714

Corresponding Secretary/Sunshine:

Lynn Rosenkrans Meyer,
973-702-8369

Communications:

Betty English

Publicity:

Tina Keppler, Lynn Rosenkrans Meyer

Museum Inventory / Cataloging:

Louise Saal, Nan Horsfield, Dennis Pegg

Genealogy:

Louise Saal, Nan Horsfield, Sadie Gass

Library:

Betty English, Dennis Pegg

Museum House & Grounds:

Bob Grabowsky, Michele Adamski

Oral History:

Rob Jacoby, Maureen Block

Special Events:

Carolyn Celli, Edie Lambert

Fall Festival:

Deborah Drumm, Chris Petrullo

Docent Coordinator:

Carolyn Celli, Dennis Pegg

Neighborhood House Committee:

Bob Grabowsky, Dennis Pegg, Skip Henschot, Roy Knutsen

Grist Mill Committee:

Lou Sylvester, Bob Grabowsky, Roy Knutsen, Dennis Pegg

Meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m.

The museum is open June through September every Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m.

©2010 Historical Society of Stillwater Township. All rights reserved.

Save the Dates!

May 1 - Sussex County History Fair - HSST will participate in the Sussex County History Fair on May 1. The fair is organized by the Sussex County Historical Society and will be held at Sussex County Community College. The fair is good chance for us to educate the public about Stillwater, its history and about the Historical Society's activities. Our April 8th membership meeting will be our planning meeting for the event. If you are able to volunteer to help out with this event but are unable to attend the membership meeting, please call Bob Grabowsky at 973-903-3244.

In addition to our exhibit, other local historical societies will be exhibiting at the fair. Plus, there will be speakers and other attractions at the event. It should be a fun and educational activity for the whole family. We will send out e-mail updates and post information on our web site as we get closer to the event.

May 13 - World War I and World War II in Poetry - HSST will hold a special program at the membership meeting on May 13. David Messineo, President of The Six Centuries Club of America and Publisher of Sensations Magazine, will present "World War I and World War II in Poetry". The event will blend Mr. Messineo's original poems on the two topics, along with additional poems from the time period. David Messineo is one of 26 individuals statewide to receive a 2009 New Jersey State Jefferson Award for Public Service for his services with The Six Centuries Club and Sensations Magazine. His publication is a three-time winner in the national American Literary Magazine Awards. The goal of The Six Centuries Club is to generate a greater appreciation and awareness of American history. Refreshments will be served.

Please feel free to invite family and friends to attend the program, also. The program is free for HSST members and there is a \$10 suggested donation for non-members.

June 6 - First Day of Summer Openings - Join us as we kick off the Sunday summer openings of the Museum on June 6 at 2 p.m. We've been renovating for several months and will have a new look when we open. Stop by and see for yourself!

June 13 - Strawberry Festival - One sure sign of approaching summer is the abundance of fresh, ripe strawberries in June. Help us celebrate on Sunday, June 13, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Museum. We'll be serving traditional strawberry shortcake, giving tours of the Museum, and, hopefully, enjoying beautiful weather.



***Stillwater Clean Up Day - April 24** - Once again, organizations throughout the town will be spring cleaning Stillwater's roads. The Historical Society is assigned to Millbrook Road. The town will reward us for our efforts and, while that helps our finances, the important point is the facelift it gives the town. Please help by signing up as an HSST team member at the Stillwater Recycling Center on the morning of the event.*

Museum Matters

Most of our members are familiar with the Historical Society's Honor Plaque which hangs in the Museum. Over the winter, the Society updated the plaque to incorporate recent members whose efforts for HSST are noteworthy. On your next visit to the Museum for a meeting or event, you may want to take a look at the new plaque as a reminder of the many contributions of HSST members over the years.

Donations and Acquisitions:

Thank you to Becky and Bob Grabowsky for donating a medallion from the Patriotic Order of Americans to the Historical Society. The Patriotic Order of Americans was a society that owned and occupied the Museum building for about 35 years in the early-mid 20th Century. Thanks also go to Louise and Ed Saal who donated a traveling trunk for costume storage (*pictured right*).



Other recent additions to our collection include a children's book, "A Buttonwood Summer" by Aline Murray Kilmer (1888-1941) and a photo postcard with an early 20th Century view of the village of Stillwater taken at a fresh angle (*pictured left*). HSST will be offering enlarged, framed versions of the postcard at the Sussex County History Fair in May and in the Museum store this summer.

Getting Ready for Summer Openings:

One of our most important responsibilities to the community is access to HSST's collection. Central to this responsibility is to offer an attractive, welcoming museum. Although we have made many improvements to the museum, there is still work to be done to get ready for summer openings.

During April, we will be painting the museum interior. If you are able to help out, please give a call to Bob Grabowsky at 973-903-3244. Anyone interested in being a docent this summer should contact Carolyn Celli at 973-383-3094 or Dennis Pegg at 973-383-1057.

Work on organizing and cataloging the collection is still on-going. Those interested should call Louise Saal 973-383-9487 or Nan Horsfield at 908-362-9462.

Stay on top of the HSST News and Happenings:

Our newsletter can't cover everything. Want to keep current on HSST news and activities in between newsletters? If so, please send your e-mail address to Maureen Block at waymaur@embarqmail.com. Once you are on our e-mail list, you'll receive timely information on HSST, history-related topics and events in the surrounding areas. We even send out the draft meeting minutes to our members via e-mail so it is easier than ever to get the details on HSST's accomplishments, plans and activities.

Oral History Corner

Featuring Alexander McCord

Based on an interview conducted on May 28, 2009 by Rob Jacoby and transcribed by Maureen Block

Alexander McCord was born in New York City in 1931. His parents had lived in New York prior to their move to Stillwater in 1926 and returned to New York for Alex's birth.

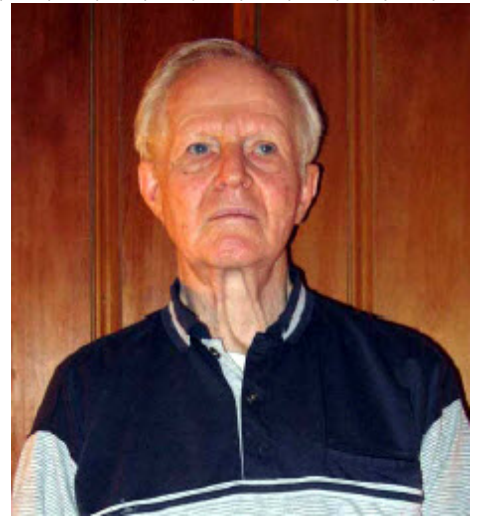
Jane McCord, Alex's mother, was a graduate of Mount Holyoke and had been a suffragette and paid organizer covering New York state. One of her largest campaigns was for Carrie Chapman Catt, the founder of the League of Women Voters. Alex's father, Joseph, was a chemist. He graduated from Brooklyn Polytech, conducted research for Standard Oil and taught in New York.

Searching for a simpler way of life, the McCords moved to Sussex County and, in the process of house-hunting, they decided to buy the Stillwater Grist Mill. It was not a lucrative pursuit and they got by with the help of money they already had. The family lived in the house across from the current Stillwater Inn, while the mill helper usually lived in the miller's house next to the Paulinskill.

Alex recalls Stillwater as a quiet village where folks minded their own business. However, there were times when virtually everyone in town would get together and play softball, ice skate or sit on the banks of the Paulinskill fishing.



*Jane McCord circa 1940
Photo courtesy of Alexander McCord*



Photograph by Rob Jacoby

One popular form of entertainment during the Depression was card-playing. Alex said he remembers playing cards a couple of times in the Kilmer house (present-day Whitehall). Mrs. Kilmer would have writers and journalists visiting from New York, including Bob [Robert] Holliday, a writer and friend of Joyce Kilmer.

Jane McCord was no longer active in politics after coming to Stillwater but she raised funds for Newton Memorial Hospital as a member of the hospital auxiliary.

In 1935, Joseph McCord was killed in a mill accident. After her husband's death, Jane took over the mill's operation. For about 20 years, the mill operated under Jane McCord's leadership.

The actual operation of the mill only took one person; the mill would run by itself after set up. The mill could process a couple of hundred pounds an hour. The price was about 10 or 15 cents per bag. The mill usually only ran during the daytime because there was not enough water to operate the mill 24 hours per day.

At 9 or 10 years of age, Alex only playing in the mill, but he was able to operate it from the time he was 12 or 13. After graduation from Lehigh University, Alex worked at the mill, but the flood of 1955 contributed to the end of the mill's operation. There simply was not enough money to be made running it. About five years later, Jane McCord moved to Arlington, Virginia.

Alex was in the Navy for almost five years - during the time frame between the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He was stationed in the northern Pacific on a destroyer escort running a DEW line (Distant Early Warning line). The DEW line was a radar system that was watching for Russian activity. In the Navy, Alex visited Japan, Okinawa, Midway, Alaska and Hawaii.

When he got out of the Navy, Alex had brief stints back in Stillwater and in Cape Cod. Finally, he moved to Hawaii, where he worked for the Bank of Hawaii for about two years. His oldest child, a son, was born in Hawaii.

Alex returned to Stillwater, worked in Newton for Seaport Finance and, in about 1971, moved to Newton. He has lived there ever since. Alex has six children, ranging from a son in his early 20s who attends Lehigh to a son who is an airline pilot in his late 40s.

What would Alex like to see happen to the mill? He says, "I would like to see it get running again. It's easy to run if it's all in repair but every year that goes by it gets worse."

The entire Alexander McCord interview is available for review at the Museum. Booklets featuring the complete interview are available for purchase for \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Please submit requests, along with \$2 for postage/handling, to:

*Historical Society of Stillwater Township
Attn: Alexander McCord Oral History,
PO Box 238,
Stillwater, NJ 07875*

If you know someone whom we should be interviewing as part of our Oral History project, please contact Rob Jacoby at 973-579-7245.

Did you know.....

- Stillwater village is built in traditional German *strassendorf* (street village) style? This means the village, including farmhouses, is built along a single street with fields surrounding the village.
- Stillwater Cemetery is renowned for its gravestones featuring archaic German language and funerary designs?
- Stillwater is prominently noted for its abundance of Native American sites in an early 20th Century New Jersey State Geological Survey? You can learn the details at this web site: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs/enviroed/oldpubs/bulletin13.pdf>

Christmas Open House 2009

On December 6, 2009, HSST held our annual Christmas Open House. Santa and Mrs. Claus were on hand to greet the kids and everyone enjoyed the refreshments. Best of all, we had a Bake Sale so folks could leave the party with that night's dessert in hand! All-in-all, it was a great way to spend a wintry Sunday afternoon and to get in the mood for the holidays.



Santa and Mrs. Claus meet their fans.



The weather was perfect for a good old-fashioned carriage ride.

Photographs by Bill Lambert



Christmas Greetings from the Claus Family



It wouldn't be Christmas without candy canes!



A nation that forgets its past can function no better than an individual with amnesia. ~David McCullough



Reaching Out to the Sussex County Historical Society

On February 15, the Historical Society of Stillwater Township and the Sussex County Historical Society (SCHS) held a joint meeting at the Hill Memorial building in Newton. Alex Everitt, President of SCHS, treated us to a tour of the building, which serves as the Society's headquarters.

The Hill Memorial building, which contains a museum and research library, is open to the public on Fridays (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) and Saturdays (9 a.m. to noon). Its exhibits span pre-historic times through the 20th Century. After the tour, the groups held a brief discussion, including agreement for HSST to attend the upcoming Sussex County History Fair.

Based on the success of this meeting, HSST plans to increase our ties to other local historical societies so we can exchange ideas, discuss solutions to common challenges and identify potential programs and events on which we can cooperate.

Attention, Family Historians!

The Warren and Hunterdon County Historical Societies have discovered several copies of an excellent out-of-print genealogical resource. "ye Colonial Kinsmen from Plymouth Rocke to York Towne", compiled by Joseph N. Kearney, is a set of 8 genealogical charts covering about 3000 descendants (6 generations) of early immigrants to Plymouth Colony and New Amsterdam. The 2' x 3' charts are suitable for framing.

This is an ideal resource for those with colonial ancestors. Several New Jersey names are on the list, including some that are familiar within Sussex County: Cole, Emmons, Hankinson, Hunt, Kent, Layton, Quick and Shotwell, to name a few.

The set of charts is available for \$30 while supplies last. For more information, please contact the Warren County Historical Society at 908-475-4246 or the Hunterdon County Historical Society at 908-782-1091.

Dues Remittance / Donation Form

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Annual Dues: Student: \$10 Individual: \$20 Family: \$30

Lifetime Membership: \$300 Individual/Family

Donation: ☐\$25 ☐\$50 ☐\$100 ☐Other \$_____

Mail completed form with check to Historical Society of Stillwater Township, PO Box 238, 900 Main Street, Stillwater, NJ 07875.

The Historical Society of Stillwater Township is an IRS recognized 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations to HSST are tax deductible. Ask your accountant or tax preparer for details. Annual memberships beginning in August or later will be active through the following year.

Historical Society of Stillwater Township

PO Box 238

Stillwater, New Jersey 07875

{MM:FIRST} {MM:LAST}
{MM:STREET}
{MM:TOWN STATE ZIP}