

The Cranbury Historical &
Preservation Society
NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 32, ISSUE TWO

JUNE, 2007

CELEBRATE THE 4TH ON THE 5TH!

BRING A PICNIC & JOIN THE FUN!

BAND CONCERT

WITH FIREWORKS AT DUSK!

MERCER COUNTY

SYMPHONIC BAND

Show Tunes, Patriotic Marches & Pop Selections

CRANBURY VILLAGE PARK GAZEBO

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2007 ~ 6 PM

Rain Date ~ July 6th

Sponsored by the Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society

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Cranbury Township Cultural & Heritage Committee



President's Message Patti Long

We plan to be very busy in the coming months. The History Center welcomes two Eagle Projects by Bob and Sam Venanzi. Look for a walkway of vintage slates, and a gristmill stone to be installed in early summer. We are preparing for our 19th Historic Tour of local homes in October. The House Tour, entitled "Then and Now," features both historic and modern homes in Cranbury. For those of you who like to remember, the first house tour took place in 1969 and was chaired by Sara Hoffman. CHPS is proud to announce the following events that are free to the public in addition to the House Tour.

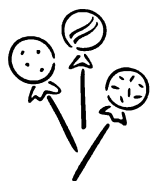
Our new exhibit is "Cranbury Tea Party." Organized by Vice President Barbary Wahlers, the exhibit complemented the tea held in early June. On July 5th Picnic our annual Picnic and Fireworks, featuring Mercer County Symphonic Orchestra, will take place in Village Park. Volunteers are needed to help with set up of 60 chairs and to provide hospitality for musicians. Contact Barbara Wahlers if you can help.

Cranbury Day features interactive history at its best! Each year we hold a fun, informative activity for kids and adults alike. Stop by the Museum and look for the Society's booth on Main Street.

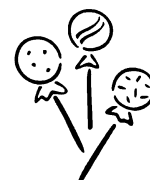
Cranbury Then & Now, our biennial House Tour takes place October 13th. Details may be found elsewhere in this newsletter.



Memorial Day Parade Goers were treated to a terrific float organized by the Society's own Mia Lindberg!
That's Rob Diamond behind the wheel of the tractor, lending a true rural feel to the proceedings!



A "Sweet" Display Hosted by the Membership Committee



The Membership Committee staffed a table at this year's Drug Free Fair on Saturday, May 19. A history of candy and penny candy in the US provided the theme. The colorful display included a candy timeline and handouts of candy recipes and candy samples. The table theme was tied to Cranbury history with a display on Harold O'Neil's store, a much frequented Cranbury business for many years before its closing. The display included two beautifully written Cranbury Press features on Harold and his store, published in 1984 and 1985. Copies of the articles were available as handouts. The table was one of Membership's best efforts thanks to committee members and Ginny Swanagan.

Organization of the 2nd Presbyterian Church

Over the years since the 2nd Presbyterian Church was organized and after it rejoined the 1st Presbyterian Church there have been many rumors as to the reasons of the split within the 1st Church and often questions from people today who have heard a rumor or two. Reading through the Trustee Minutes 1812 - 1909 of the 1st Presbyterian Church clues to the separation begin with an entry dated Feb. 14, 1833. It states that the Trustees disapprove of a report concerning enlarging or rebuilding the church. The next entry dated March 25, 1837 notes a "request from part of the congregation signed by Benjamin M. Clark to have a congregational mtng for the purpose of enlarging or building a new church". The board did not grant the request at that time since it had been discussed earlier and they saw no need to discuss the issue further. The 1st Church was much smaller than today and was crowded with congregants from Cranbury, Hightstown, Jamesburg, Monroe, Dayton, Dutch Neck, Perrineville, Manalapan and areas between. The church had morning and evening services plus the minister would serve alternate Sundays in other communities in turn with the ministers from Allentown and Tennent. With all this, the Trustees did not see a need to enlarge or build a new church.

From the Session Records of the 2nd Presbyterian Church 1838 - 1869 the organization of the church is recorded. It states that 29 members of the 1st Church had "endeavored in vain to obtain either an enlargement of that edifice or the erection of a new and more spacious one, thought it their duty to withdraw and erect a new House of Worship for themselves and such others as might unite with them." In autumn of 1837 they began to build the 2nd Church on property bought from Benjamin M. Clark. Building was finished in June that year and dedicated June 26, 1838. The 29 past members of the 1st Church and three people from New Brunswick made up the congregation. Of these new congregants, three were Ruling Elders of the 1st Church who became the Elders of their new church.

This didn't end some of the struggle between the "29" and the 1st Church. In the 1st Church Trustee Minutes, dated Jan. 12, 1839, the 2nd Church Trustees asked for a proportion of the 1st Church's funds which "they deemed their equitable share". This was denied. Again on March 21, 1840 the 2nd Church Trustees ask for a proportion of the 1st Church's funds and real estate. This was denied. On Jan. 11, 1841 it was reported that an application was made to the State Legislature by Trustees of the 2nd Church for a division of property and funds of the 1st Church. Elders Thomas Potts and Peter Duncan along with Rev. Symmes C. Henry of the 1st Church were appointed a committee to the Legislature against the claims of the 2nd church. This is the last entry that mentions the suit against the 1st Church.

Over the years the two churches did work together within the community. When the 1st Church was undergoing remodeling the 2nd Church opened their doors for the 1st Church members

as did the 1st Church when the 2nd was enlarging its' building. Ministers of both churches would substitute for each other. Congregants from both churches switched membership to the other. Reading the names of congregants of the churches it may be established that some people joined the church closest to their houses. Several members of the 2nd Church lived on Park Place a short walk to and quick escape from to get home after the long services. Yet, there were people who left both churches in a tizzy because they didn't like the way things were done or disagreed with the minister or session within one of the churches. We will never know the real reasons since these people no longer exist in this world for us to ask. Tiffs still go on in churches today.

The 1st Presbyterian Church has the old Session and Trustee Minutes books and the record books of the congregants of both churches. A committee has been appointed to see that they are safely stored in an archival, climate controlled atmosphere. They will be taken to the Princeton Theological Seminary's Library where they will be available for research. The 1st Presbyterian Church will retain ownership of the books. There are microfilms of the 1st Church Session and Trustee books at the Cranbury and Monroe Libraries that many use for genealogy research. The committee hopes to get funding through grants and any other means to have all the 1st and 2nd Church books digitized to be viewed through the 1st Presbyterian Church's web site. These books are loaded with valuable history and genealogy. They are not just Church history but also Cranbury history. The first Session book is dated 1791 - 1817. Records prior to 1791 were not kept up to date and that was the first year that Session minutes and records of baptisms, marriages and deaths were regularly recorded. When Rev. Gilbert Tennent Snowden the third minister [1790 - 1797] took charge of the congregation he found that four of the Session members were unable to attend to their duties as they were "incapacitated by disease of the infirmities of old age". Before Rev. Snowden's pastorate, very little was paid to the ministerial duties of the previous minister due to ill health. There were no regular visits to congregants, nor regular session meetings or books that recorded congregants. He searched for records and history of the beginning of the 1st Church without luck. In 1875 Rev. Joseph Gaston Symmes recorded in the third session book that session book number two was lost. This is another reason to save these books.

If you have photos of the 2nd Presbyterian Church to share, either copies or originals, contact Roi Tayler at the History Center.



Roi Taylor, Director of the History Center, has come across some interesting entries in the Session Minutes of the 1st Presbyterian Church. These minutes bemoan the evils of playing billiards.

1st Presbyterian Church — Session Minutes Vol. IV — July 2, 1882
Recorded at Session Meeting - page 80:

This session has learned with sorrow and alarm that public gaming places, frequented by the young mainly, are increasing in our midst. Often these places are connected with the sale of intoxicating liquors, and in nearly all cases accompanied with gambling. All such places, whatever they may be and wherever kept, of nightly and constant resort, can only be evil in their tendency. Whatever carries the young away from home habitually is injurious and dangerous. And so we feel constrained to raise a warning voice. We would that those who maintain such places should know that their action is disapproved by all good people. We would urge young men to heed the advice of those who are older. We would entreat parents to know where their boys resort, and strive to turn their feet early away from evil. We would especially warn those professing Christianity that resorting to such places is injurious to themselves and to the cause of Christ; and such conduct cannot be persisted in without very seriously affecting their standing in this church.

Joseph G. Symmes, Moderator & Clerk

Community Service Credit Offered at the History Center

High school sophomores wishing to earn community service credits can put in their hours right here in Cranbury, starting this summer at the Cranbury History Center, 6 S. Main St., a facility run by the Cranbury Historical Society. We have a variety of tasks such as scanning and cataloging early photographs, entering collections onto the Past Perfect

Museum computer program, or helping to organize storage space, label collections or check the contents of costume & textile boxes. For more information or inquiries, please call Ginny Swanagan at 395-0420 or email us at historycenter@comcast.net.



This lovely view of the Village Park Gazebo, with historic Water Tower in the background, graces the cover of the Society's newest publication, *"A History of Cranbury New Jersey."* The booklet is an updated and expanded version of a booklet published in 1997. The brochure has been made possible, in part, by the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State.

Speaking of the Gazebo, did you know that it was erected in 1976 in observance of the nation's Bicentennial? The gazebo commemorates an early bandstand, located over Brainerd Lake on Main Street, from 1915 to 1932. The bandstand was the venue for summer evening concerts by Cranbury's own Goodwin's Band. Views of the band and bandstand can be seen above.

Here is how Cranbury celebrated our nation's birthday in the late 19th century, as recorded in the Cranbury Press:

July 1, 1898, Attractions for the 4th

The 4th of July promises to be a lively day for Cranbury and vicinity the one thing now needful being clear weather. In the afternoon there will be some fine trotting and pacing at the Cranbury and Hightstown Driving Park. There will be three classes of speed; heats, best two in three. The winner will receive a blanket, the second will be a whip and the third a season ticket for the use of the track. There will be a refreshment stand on the grounds and good order will be maintained. admission 25 cents, carriages admitted free. The proceeds will be for the rent and expense of the tract. Trotting begins at 1 o'clock. In the Evening, The Daughters of Liberty and Jr O.U. A. M. will provide entertainment at the Odd Fellows Hall. There will be speaking at 4 o'clock by prominent men of state. A good supper and refreshments will be served. Supper tickets .25 cents. Goodwin's Band will furnish music and in the evening fireworks will complete a nicely arranged celebration.

News from the Membership Committee ~ Bev Luck & Kirstie Venanzi

The Historical Society is pleased to welcome the following new members: Dick & Carole Betz; Blue Rooster Bakery & Café; Ron Slicner; Carroll Bever. Again, please thank and support the following local business establishments that support the Society through paid membership: Allen & Stults Company; Blue Rooster Bakery & Café; Chip Trucking; Cranbury Comfort Systems; Cranbury Pizza; David Wells Antiques; Herr's Plumbing & Heating Service; Montessori Preschool Academy Cranbury.

Please take a moment to look at your mailing label on this newsletter. A red dot means that we are still awaiting your 2007 dues. A form is available below for your convenience. If your payment and this publication crossed in the mail, please disregard this friendly reminder.



The Society notes with sadness the passing of members William Bain and Babs Thomsen, who was one of our founders.

2007 MEMBERSHIP

Mail checks to: **Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society.** P.O. Box 77, Cranbury, NJ 08512

Membership Status (check one): New Renewal

Membership Category (check one): Individual, \$15.00 Family, \$25.00 Sponsor, \$35.00
 Patron, \$50.00 or more Corporate, \$150.00 or more

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Matching gifts are a significant source of support for the Society. If you work (or have retired from) one of the hundreds of companies that generously match employee donations, please don't let this opportunity pass you by. Just ask your Personnel Office for a Matching Gift form, fill it in and send it to us. We'll do the rest. Together we can continue to preserve our unique heritage.

Please consider one or more of the following volunteer opportunities:

Museum docent: Social functions:

House tour: Educational programs: Fundraising: Publicity:

Other: _____

Cranbury Then and Now
House Tour Set for October, 2007

Are you interested in getting an “inside look” at homes in Cranbury that will show you our town’s historic architecture in contrast with the architecture of the town’s newest construction? Well this year’s house tour will be just what you’re looking for. With the theme of “Cranbury Then and Now” the homes were carefully selected by Cranbury’s Historical Preservation Society to provide a comparison of some of Cranbury’s oldest homes with some of the newest.

Don’t miss this opportunity to take an inside tour of eight homes that illustrate how well Cranbury has been able to blend its great past with its current culture and excellent prospects for the future. Tickets for this event will cost \$20 in advance and \$25 the day of the event with all proceeds benefiting Cranbury’s Historical Preservation Society. On the day of the event there will be a luncheon held by the Friends Of The Cranbury Public Library; the cost will be \$10 per person. As details are finalized and more information becomes available it will be posted on the Web at www.cranburyhistory.org/housetour/ For general information about the event contact Audrey Smith 609-655-5361 or Bobbie Marlowe 609-655-3493 and for publicity issues contact Victor Scire at 609-395-8293.

Tour organizers Norma Swale, Audrey Smith and Patti Long review plans for the October event.



Cranbury Historical & Preservation Society
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Cranbury, NJ 08512

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Cranbury New Jersey
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Cranbury Museum

4 Park Place East
Open Sundays 1 to 4 pm and by appt.
Ph: 609/655-2611

Cranbury History Center

6 South Main Street
Open Tuesdays 10:30 am to 1:30 pm & by
appt.
Ph: 609/860-1889
Email: historycenter@comcast.net

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find out what it means!**