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# TRENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# ANNUAL REPORT 2009

January 2010

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## Advocacy

A key component of the Trenton Historical Society's mission is preservation advocacy, both for historic buildings and artifacts. In 2009, the Society undertook two major advocacy efforts:

### Trenton Central High School

Built in 1932, Trenton Central High School (TCHS) is an excellent example of Georgian Revival-style architecture and a city landmark that has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The building has been threatened since 2005, when plans for its rehabilitation and continued use as the city's high school fell through due to funding issues. Since that time, the state Schools Development Authority (SDA), which controls the funding, has recommended demolition and replacement of TCHS.

Over the past four years, the Society has played a pivotal role in forming a coalition with alumni, parents, residents, and other civic organizations to fight for the building's rehabilitation. A Better High School Plan for Trenton

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### STOP THE WRECKING BALL

The Society's annual fundraiser, Stop the Wrecking Ball, was held in November on the third floor of the Trenton Masonic Temple, in the newly finished offices of architectural firm Clarke Caton Hintz. The event featured a silent auction of Trenton-related memorabilia. More than \$6,000 was raised to support activities of the Preservation Committee, in particular the Restore Trenton! Grant program (see page 2).

## Programs & Events

### January

Annual Meeting at Thomas Edison State College

The 2009 Annual Meeting program featured the Capital State Park. A presentation by Richard Hunter of Hunter Research detailed archaeological investigations on Petty's Run, and Sally Lane of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection described the development plans for the park.

### February

Three Centuries of Black Soldiers at Old Barracks Museum

Historical re-enactors representing 300 years of African-American military history displayed historical information and offered demonstrations to visitors. Cosponsored by the Old Barracks Museum, the free event attracted a large and diverse crowd.

### May

Spring Program at the Trenton City Museum  
Preservation consultant Kathleen Galop offered a program, the Olmsted Historic Landscape Legacy in New Jersey, highlighting her experiences with the preservation of Branch Brook Park in Newark. Sixty-five people attended the program, which was offered through the Horizon Speakers Bureau of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities and cosponsored by the Trenton Museum Society.

### October

Vintage Baseball Game in Cadwalader Park  
Historical reenactors from the Flemington Neshanock and Newark Eureka squared off in Cadwalader Park for a baseball game played by nineteenth-century rules.

## **Research Requests**

In 2009, the Trenton Historical Society (THS) filled 66 separate research requests from all over the United States. We sent out 80 copies of obituaries from Trenton newspapers, 9 copies of photographs and 11 other copies, such as tax or employee records. For the first time since we started this service back in 2002, we raised our rates and are charging differing amounts based on the effort needed to fulfill the specific request.

*Advocacy*

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(BHSPT) has developed conceptual plans for the reuse of TCHS and presented the plans to the district's Facilities Advisory Board and the SDA. In 2009, BHSPT received additional support from Preservation New Jersey, the statewide non-profit preservation group. The battle for Trenton High will continue in 2010 with a new governor and leadership in the SDA.

## **Trentoniana Collection**

The Trentoniana Collection of the Trenton Public Library is the foremost archival repository for the city's historical records and ephemera. The Society has supported the collection for many years, acquiring artifacts and making genealogical materials available to the public through its website.

Citywide budget cuts in 2009 directly affected the Trenton Public Library system, which was forced to reduce hours at all of its branches to cut costs. Concerned about the possible effects of budget cuts on the Trentoniana Collection, the Society expressed its support of these significant resources through letters to the Mayor and City Council. Trustees met with the Library Director and the President of the Library Board to discuss our concerns and offer support for the collection. The city's budgetary woes will undoubtedly continue to threaten the library system and thus the Trentoniana Collection in the future, and the Society remains committed to the protection of this important resource.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Artifacts Committee**

The THS Artifacts Committee obtained 99 items or groups of items related to Trenton history and donated them to the Trentoniana Collection of the Trenton Public Library in 2009. The overwhelming majority of these items were purchased from Ebay, with a few from local shops and some generous donations from Mike Severa, Jeff Owens, Mary Alice Everett, Gary Nigh, Debbie Underhill and the Ocean County Historical Museum. While there were a few (8) three-dimensional objects such as an engraved cabinet door from the Crescent temple, golf balls and various pieces of Trenton pottery, most (61) of the acquisitions were papers (letters, books, catalogs, etc), and images (30) such as photos and prints. Among the paper items were 15 high school yearbooks, some interesting deeds and an 1818 letter about the Trenton Bridge.

### **Preservation Committee**

In 2009, the Preservation Committee administered its third round of Restore Trenton! grants. The grants provide funding to homeowners for exterior restoration work on historic houses in Trenton. The committee selected six projects to fund, awarding a total of \$11,550 to the recipients. The projects represented a total investment of \$26,185 in the city's historic properties.

### **Calendar Committee**

This year, the Calendar Committee introduced the Society's third calendar of historic images for sale at local gift shops, bookstores, and other vendors, as well as through the Society's website. More than 95% of the 350 "Faces of Trenton 2010" calendars have been sold to date, raising more than \$1,100 for the Society.

## **Collaborations & Partnerships**

### **Food in New Jersey Exhibit**, New Jersey State Museum & New Jersey Council for the Humanities

This traveling Smithsonian exhibit was displayed at the NJ State Museum in early 2009, and the Society sponsored a tour of the Adam Exton & Son Cracker Factory on Centre Street in association with the exhibit.

### **Spirit of the Jerseys State History Fair**, New Jersey Division of Parks & Forestry

This annual event held at Washington Crossing State Park features historic sites, historical sites, reenactors, and other history-related organizations. The Society had a booth at the event for the third year in a row.

### **Summertime Celebration Event**, Cadwalader Park Alliance

The Society offered walking tours of Cadwalader Park as part of this citywide celebration in the park.

### **Trenton 1784**, Trenton 1784 – The Nation's Capital Committee

The Society cosponsored this community-wide celebration of the 54-day stay of the Continental Congress in Trenton (01 Nov-24 Dec, 1784). Highlights included signage in some 50 sites around the downtown, identifying what was there in 1784; an online exhibit with a different illustrated feature about life in Trenton in 1784 at

[www.trenton1784.org](http://www.trenton1784.org); a kick-off celebration hosted by I Am Trenton Foundation at the NJ State Museum; and a Tavern Trek (to commemorate Congress' meetings at a tavern).

### **Patriots Week**, Trenton Downtown Association

Patriots Week followed Trenton1784, and while the offerings were fewer at a time of scaled-back grants, the 18th century was celebrated in concerts, meals, lectures, films and tours, all leading up to the reenactment on a sunny day of both Battles of Trenton.

## [www.trentonhistory.org](http://www.trentonhistory.org)

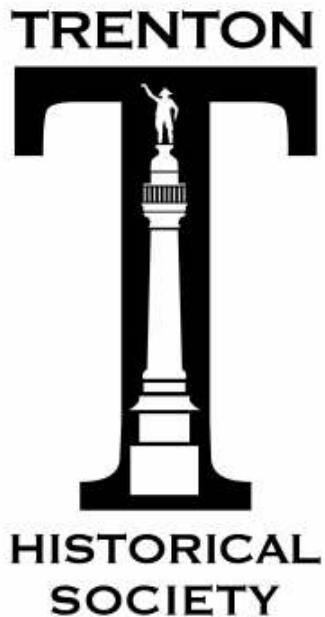
### *The Trenton Historical Society Website*

The THS website ([trentonhistory.org](http://trentonhistory.org)) had 86,488 unique visits in 2009, with 285,979 page views. The most popular page of the site was our entry obituaries page with almost 23,000 page views, far exceeding any other pages including our home page which was second at just over 16,000 page views. The third most used page contained our site's search feature. Most other popular pages were related to genealogy, such as high school yearbooks, cemetery listings and city directories, with the exception of the page on Trenton pottery marks. The focus on genealogy-related traffic is also seen in the list of sites that were the top referrers to [trentonhistory.org](http://trentonhistory.org). Other sites such as local governments, bloggers and wikipedia were less important referrers, but most users found our website through search engines such as google.

The site continued to expand in 2009 with 77 new pages. Most (50) of the pages were additions to our on-line index of obituaries in Trenton newspapers. Two were the result of a grant from the Mercer County Culture & Heritage Commission; but the rest were the work of a single volunteer, Bob Shaw. Through his generous efforts we have almost completed the 1980's and added months of data from the 60's, 70's and 90's. Many of the other new pages added other genealogical data: 11 more yearbook listings, several partial transcriptions from school records, police blotters and immigration records and two employee records indexes. In addition, general pages on tours and land records, a partial transcription of a local farmer's

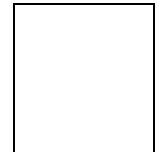
## THS BUDGET - CALENDAR YEAR 2009

	Starting balances	EXPENSES		INCOME		Balances
<b><u>GENERAL FUND</u></b>		<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>	
MEMBERSHIP		--		\$4,000.00	\$475.00	
DONATIONS TO THS		--		\$500.00	\$1,233.21	
INTEREST		--		\$500.00	\$116.30	
ANNUAL CORPORATE FILING		\$25.00	\$50.00	--		
CHARITABLE REGISTRATION		\$60.00	\$150.00	--		
POSTAGE/COPYING		\$750.00	\$136.64	--		
P.O. BOX RENTAL		\$65.00		--		
DUES/MEMBERSHIPS		\$500.00	\$495.00	--		
WEBSITE/COMPUTER		\$250.00	\$1,624.19	--		
SUNSHINE FUND		\$100.00		--		
TELEPHONE		\$350.00	\$325.14	--		
INSURANCE		\$750.00	\$721.00	--		
BANKING FEES		\$200.00	\$86.37	--		
AUDIT FEES		\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	--		
STATIONERY/SUPPLIES		\$150.00	\$266.28	--		
DONATIONS BY THS		\$250.00		--		
EDUCATION (Speakers, Brochures)		\$2,000.00	\$536.58	--		
TOURS/Merchandise		--		\$0.00	\$170.00	
SALARY		\$2,000.00	\$587.21	--		
ACCOUNTANT		\$700.00	\$525.00	--		
FEDERAL & STATE TAXES		\$650.00	\$265.29	--		
OPERATING SUPPORT GRANTS		--	--	\$4,400.00	\$0.00	
<i><b>Subtotal</b></i>	<b>\$23,312.65</b>	<b>\$10,600.00</b>	<b>\$7,568.70</b>	<b>\$9,400.00</b>	<b>\$1,994.51</b>	<b>\$17,738.46</b>
<b><u>ARTIFACTS FUND</u></b>						
PURCHASES		\$2,400.00	\$1,396.36	--		
RESEARCH SERVICES		--		\$1,000.00	\$781.48	
DONATIONS		--		\$3,500.00	\$503.00	
<i><b>Subtotal</b></i>	<b>\$4,794.04</b>	<b>\$2,400.00</b>	<b>\$1,396.36</b>	<b>\$4,500.00</b>	<b>\$1,284.48</b>	<b>\$4,682.16</b>
<b><u>PRESERVATION FUND</u></b>						
CALENDAR		\$1,200.00	\$1,859.28	\$2,000.00	\$1,694.95	
FUNDRAISING EVENTS		\$7,000.00	\$5,082.27	\$25,000.00	\$10,750.38	
RESTORE TRENTON		\$15,000.00	\$7,200.00		\$1,000.00	
SOUTH TRENTON		\$0.00		--		
PUBLICITY/EDUCATION		\$500.00		--		
<i><b>Subtotal</b></i>	<b>\$35,241.27</b>	<b>\$23,700.00</b>	<b>\$14,141.55</b>	<b>\$27,000.00</b>	<b>\$13,445.33</b>	<b>\$34,545.05</b>
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b>\$63,347.96</b>	<b>\$36,700.00</b>	<b>\$23,106.61</b>	<b>\$40,900.00</b>	<b>\$16,724.32</b>	<b>\$56,965.67</b>
<b><u>GRANTS (Awarded)</u></b>	-					
HC PROJECT & County	\$751.33		\$2,200.00		\$500.00	-\$948.67
	<b>\$64,099.29</b>		<b>\$25,306.61</b>		<b>\$17,224.32</b>	<b>\$56,017.00</b>



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