

TRENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT—2010

P.O. Box 1112 Trenton, New Jersey 08608 (609) 396-4478 www.trentonhistory.org

Strategic Plan

At its January 2011 meeting the Board of Trustees of the Trenton Historical Society (THS) approved the 2011-2013 Strategic Plan that had been a project of the past year. The Plan promotes programs and advocacy projects to be undertaken in the upcoming year as well as new administrative procedures to be implemented. The Strategic Plan is available by request from the Society.

Treasurer's Report

The Society remains in good financial standing and had a slight increase in its assets, a strong showing during the recession. Most budgetary goals were met except that membership dues did not meet expectations; we will focus on increasing services to members in hopes of reversing this trend. Revenue from the sale of the 2011 Calendar was \$3,753, higher than the \$2,000 projected.

At the beginning of the fiscal (calendar) year, the Trenton Historical Society had \$56,017.00 in checking, PayPal, and money market accounts; at the end of the year, we held \$62,264.96.

Treasurer Gary Nigh will step down at the end of his term after maintaining the Society's financial records for many years.

Support from the State of New Jersey

With a General Operating Support grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, the Society was able to hire a part-time (20 hours per month) Co-ordinator. Until now, THS had been primarily an all-volunteer organization. Our new

staff-person, Maureen O'Connor Leach, will assume some of the administrative responsibilities that have been carried out by volunteer board members so that they are able to focus more on programs and advocacy. Ms. O'Connor Leach began in May. The grant will also be used to cover some administrative expenses.

At the end of the year, THS learned that that it had been awarded a grant of \$7,243 to produce a survey of African-American historic sites in Trenton. Board members Gary Nigh, Damon Tsyvaynas, and Sally Lane worked on the application. The project will be implemented Richard Grubb & Associates, cultural resource planners.

Membership

The Society has several plans to retain and increase membership. At its January 2010 Annual Meeting, it offered its program to the general public as a way of exposing potential members to the organization. We are focusing on increasing our e-mail address lists so that announcements can be made quickly and inexpensively to the members.

We have also begun to venture into social media with Facebook and Twitter in hopes of attracting the many people who now communicate extensively on the Web.

Press and Publicity

To let members and the public learn more of our activities, we have also increased our connections to traditional media by sending out more press releases which have been picked up by

local newspapers. The *Trenton Times* published an article on the Restore Trenton! Historic Rehabilitation grants on July 9 and listed it as a “Hit” of the week on July 10.

The Society has also appeared in segments on Mercer County history on WZBN-TV and on radio on WWFM. Many of these press initiatives were undertaken by Board member Stephanie Cherry-Farmer and Coordinator O’Connor Leach.

Web-site

In 2010, the THS website continued to be widely used with 80,309 unique visits and 289,901 page views which is up slightly from last year. Pages on the site devoted to genealogical interests, particularly obituaries, continue to be the most popular, with the obituaries entry page receiving far more views than even our homepage. The page on pottery marks is also very popular with documents such as *Podemore’s Old & New*, the *Report on the Eagle Cotton Factory*, the *Survey of the North Ward* and the *1929 History of Trenton* drawing a consistently high number of views.

The search page for the site continues to draw a large number of hits, heightened by the addition to the homepage of direct access buttons to this feature as well as contact, join, and sitemap pages. Other additions this year were the downloadable self-guided audio tours for the Battles of Trenton and several new transcriptions of high school yearbook listings. The most notable additions were from volunteer Bob Shaw, who single-handedly has been expanding the on-line obituaries index with the addition of many more months from the 1970s to 1990s. Under Board member Damon Tvaryanas, the web-site is currently being reviewed.

Committee Reports

Artifacts Committee

Through the Artifacts Committee including Gary Nigh and Richard Willinger, THS donated 41 items or groups of items to the Trentoniana Room of the Trenton Public Library. They were

a wide range of Trenton ephemera, notable among them: an 1826 deed for a ferry across the Delaware River; the 1898 journal of fourth-grader, Frank Reddan, future journalist; a 1920s photo of the cigar rollers of the Bayuk Factory; and an advertising fan from Dades Funeral Home, a prominent African American business in Trenton. The Trenton Historical Society continues to purchase most items on eBay, but also thanks the individuals who have generously donated Trenton memorabilia: Kass Cooker who sent a 1912 Program for the NJ Sunday School Association; Mary Buchner who donated 1890s Commencement Programs from the State Model School; and Lorraine Koski who sent us a copy of her book, *Elwood’s War* which mentions a Trenton soldier from World War II.

To pay for its purchases, the Committee conducts research services of obituaries, city directories, and high school yearbooks for a modest fee. For further information, see www.trentonhistory.org/Services.

Stop the Wrecking Ball, 2010

The seventh annual Stop the Wrecking Ball fundraiser was held in an 1877 mansion on Greenwood Avenue that had been occupied for more than 50 years by bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey.

Our hosts were Paul Schorr and his son, Ben, who went out of their way to provide for the party in a building they continue to rehabilitate. Thanks to them, the involvement of the full Board of Trustees as well as party planner Jude Martin Cianfano, we realized more than \$8,000 for the next round of Restore Trenton! Historic Rehabilitation Housing grants. The evening was attended by more than 130 supporters.

This event enables our members and supporters to enjoy an elegant evening in a building they would not otherwise see, while contributing to the preservation of Trenton homes. We’re grateful to sponsors and patrons, to participants and auction bidders, and to all those who donated their time, effort or auction items.

Restore Trenton! Historic Rehabilitation Grant Program

This past year five Trenton residences benefitted from \$11,000 in grants disburse through the David Collier Grant Fund after a review of the applications. These grants are supported by the Stop the Wrecking Ball fund-raiser. Homes selected are on Academy Street, Richey Place, Riverside Avenue (2), and Tyler Street. Members of the organizing committee included Stephanie Cherry-Farmer, Jerry Harcar, John Hatch, and former board member Sara Andre.

Research Services

In 2010, Board members Gary Nigh and Glenn Modica filled 60 individual research requests from all over the United States, Canada, and England. The most requested items were obituaries from Trenton newspapers followed by directory searches, employee records, and high school yearbook photos. There were also some special requests including copies of photos to be used in a book about vintage cycling in New Jersey and for proposals to restore the Kuser Mansion on West State Street.

In 2011, Research Services looks forward to expanding its services to assist genealogists, researchers, and the general public to provide more information from historical documents held by the Trenton Historical Society and the Trentoniana Collection of the Trenton Public Library.

Calendar Committee

Board members Karl Flesch and Wendy Nardi produced the 2011 Calendar that focuses on the intersection of Broad and State Streets. Vintage photos were paired with photos of the same locales today. The Calendar netted more than \$1,700 for the Society.

Programs and Collaborations

Archaeological Society of New Jersey

The Society was a co-sponsor of their annual meeting whose topic was Trenton history. The program was held on Saturday, January 16 at the New Jersey State Museum.

New Jersey Council for the Humanities

The Society continued to present talks sponsored by the Horizon Speakers Bureau of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. For the first time, a talk was offered as a presentation for the general public at the annual meeting on January 31. The hope was that by inviting non-members to attend a program, they would see one of the activities of the Society.

John T. Kraft spoke on "The Lenape or Delaware Indians," the first settlers in the area of New Jersey, surrounded by objects from his personal collection of original and reproduction artifacts. The slide-illustrated talk was attended by two young children who were delighted to try on copies of Native American clothing.

Old Barracks Museum

In February, THS was a co-sponsor of the Black History Month event "Three Centuries of Black Soldiers" held at the Old Barracks. This was the second year for the event, and the Old Barracks asked the Historical Society to join with it to help develop the programming and publicize the event.

Over the week-end of February 27 and 28, almost 175 visitors met with re-enactors of African American soldiers from the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World Wars I and II, some of whom came from as far Maryland. Board member Algernon Ward participated in the program planning.

The Old Barracks was also the site of the THS Annual Meeting on January 31, 2010.

The Contemporary Club

In April, THS joined with the Contemporary Club, a women's civic group to help co-sponsor their long-standing "Four Views of Trenton" bus tours. These day-long trips present aspects of Trenton's history, industry, and culture across the city. Board members Sally Lane and John Hatch participated as tour leaders in two of the programs.

Patriots Week

While the Society did not present a sponsored program last year, Board member Sally Lane continues to attend the planning meetings so that THS can have input into the programming of the this week-long celebration of Trenton's involvement in the turning point of the Revolutionary War.

Advocacy

A Better High School Plan for Trenton

During the year, the Society through Board members Jennifer Leynes and Glenn Modica continued to monitor the State's plans for the Trenton Central High School building. Our position is that this historic building should be rehabilitated and not torn down. With the change in administration to Governor Christie, plans are being reviewed and a final decision has not yet been made.

South Broad Street Bridge project

The Board sent a letter to the Historic Preservation Office at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection stating its request for a thorough review of this project which has the potential for affecting historic parts of the bridge dating to the 18th century. Also included was an analysis of the current plan.

Trenton Mural Arts Project

The Board began a discussion with the group planning to create a mural at the Home Rubber Company site on Route 209 at Cass Street. We are seeking to maintain the historic and artistic integrity of its commercial signage while supporting the creation of a mural that speaks to Trenton past, present, and future.

Petty's Run archaeological site

In November, the Society learned that the State agency responsible for the Statehouse grounds had voted to cover over this excavation of the only one of five known Colonial-era steel mills. The Board organized an op-ed essay that ran in the *Trenton Times* on December 24 suggesting that the \$400,000 in State funds proposed to stabilize and cover the site could be better used to stabilize it, provide attractive fencing that

would allow the site to be seen by the public, and provide interpretive signage that would explain its significance to Trenton, New Jersey, and American industrial history.

Mayoral Candidates Questionnaire/Meeting with the Mayor

Led by Board member Gary Nigh, THS sent a questionnaire to all ten of the Trenton mayoral hopefuls in Spring 2010. Questions asked about their positions on historic preservation, heritage tourism, historic rehabilitation tax credits, and other related topics. Responses were placed on the THS web-site for the primary and run-off elections.

The Board has requested a meeting with Mayor Tony Mack to present its issues to the city administration.

TRENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2010

Helen M. Shannon, President
Damon Tvaryanas, Vice-President
Gary Nigh, Treasurer*
Wendy Nardi, Secretary

Stephanie Cherry-Farmer
Art Cianfano*
Karl Flesch
Jerome Harcar
John Hatch, AIA
Sally Lane
Jennifer Leynes*
Glenn Modica
Algernon Ward*
Richard Willinger

Maureen O'Connor Leach, Coordinator

*Term ending

We thank those Board members who are leaving for their work and their dedication to preserving the history of Trenton.