

Places In Time

LAWRENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL 2011

Lawrence History Month

Lawrence Township will celebrate our third annual Lawrence History Month in October with a program celebrating the 250th anniversary of the 1761 Brearley House, a groundbreaking lecture on the history of slavery and abolition in Lawrence, and a local history bus tour for hundreds of fourth-graders from Lawrence Intermediate School.

History Month begins on Saturday, October 1st, when the Brearley House will be open for free guided tours from 10 a.m. until noon. The following day, October 2nd, is Community Day, so bring your local history questions and contributions to the Lawrence Historical Society table from 12:30-4:00 p.m.

We close out Lawrence History Month on Sunday, October 23rd, with a report on the findings of the first in-depth study of the history of slavery and abolition in Lawrence Township.



Brearley House 250th Anniversary Program

On Sunday, October 16th, the Lawrence Historical Society will mark the 250th anniversary of the 1761 Brearley House with a special program and panel discussion. The participants will be architect Michael Mills, who supervised the restoration of the house, archaeologist Ian Burrow, who supervised the digs around the house, and Township Historian Dennis Waters. The program begins at 3:00 p.m. at the Brearley House and is free and open to the public. It will be followed by self-guided tours.

Michael Mills is the partner in charge of preservation for Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects, LLC. He is an expert in the analysis of historic buildings and in the design and supervision of preservation and restoration projects. Mr. Mills has served as President of the statewide non-profit organization Preservation New Jersey and is a Past Chair of the Historic Resources Committee of the American Institute of Architects.

Ian Burrow is Vice President and Principal Archaeologist at Hunter Research, Inc. He has more than 30 years of experience directing cultural resource management projects in the United States and the United Kingdom, with particular expertise in directing archaeological investigations carried out in conjunction with restoration projects, such as the Brearley House.

Mary Tanner Lecture: Slavery & Abolition in Lawrence Township

The occasion is the annual Mary Tanner Lecture sponsored by the Lawrence Historical Society. Presenting the program will be two historians from Rider University, Professors Brooke Hunter and Roderick McDonald. Their talk, entitled "Slavery and Abolition in Lawrence Township, New Jersey," draws on a detailed analysis of census data, court records, and other primary source material. It will begin at 2:00 p.m. in room 201 of the Science Building on the Rider campus. It is free and open to the public.

Brooke Hunter is Associate Professor of History at Rider. Her research focuses on the mid-Atlantic region in the Age of Revolution. She received Rider's Distinguished Teaching Award 2011-12. Roderick McDonald is Professor of History at Rider and Editor Emeritus of the *Journal of the Early Republic*. An expert on the history of slavery, he is the author of several books on African American and Afro-Caribbean history, and is a 2009 John Simon

Fourth-Grade History Tour

Thanks to a generous grant from the Lawrence Township Education Foundation, the entire fourth grade class at Lawrence Intermediate School - all 300 of them - will have the chance to visit in person many of Lawrence's most important historic landmarks. These field trips will begin on October 7th and continue for four school days. Students will visit Lawrenceville Main Street, the campus of the Lawrenceville School, the 1761 Brearley House, the Delaware and Raritan Canal, and the Shabakunk Creek, site of our town's most famous Revolutionary War battle.

The tours will be led by Township Historian Dennis Waters and by Daniel Ben-Asher, editor of *A Guide to Lawrenceville's Historic Landmarks*, which is being used by the students as a reference textbook. Lawrence Township donated 300 copies of the historic guidebook to Lawrence Township Public Schools in order to make this possible.

Lawrence Library Turns 50, Historian Waters to Give Lecture

On December 14, 1961, Mercer County opened the first Lawrence Branch of the Mercer County Library System in the back of the Lawrence Shopping Center. Since then, the library has moved three times and is now the headquarters for the county system. To celebrate, the library will be hosting events throughout the fall, including a lecture by Township Historian Dennis Waters and a photo display sponsored by the Society.

The lecture will take place on November 15 at 7:00pm and will cover the changes the town and the library have experienced over the past 50 years. Refreshments will be served.

The photo exhibit will be on display in the library lobby for the month of December and will include images from the library's history as well as vintage scenes from Lawrence Township.

Other events planned for the fall include a movie matinee series focusing on films from 1961. The series will be hosted by Society member Rina Banerjee and will also include trivia and a discussion about the films. Upcoming films are *The Hustler* (October 3rd, 2:00pm) and *The innocents* (November 14, 2:00pm). Refreshments will be served.

Historian Clifford Zink, author of *The Roebling Legacy*, will give a talk about Trenton's greatest industrial family and the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. December 1, 7:00pm

Finally, the main celebration will take place on December 14 with a morning event and all-day open house.

For more information, please consult the library's website at www.mcl.org.



Port Mercer Canal House Damaged in Hurricanes Irene and Lee Flooding

The flooding from Hurricane Irene took a toll on the Port Mercer Canal House and surrounding grounds. During the storm, water from the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the nearby Stony Brook rushed the Port Mercer area with enough force to tear up parts of Quaker Road and erode the banks of the canal, as well as dump debris in the parking lot. PMCH saw four feet of water in the kitchen addition and almost the entire basement was under water. The outhouse on the patio also took on water that damaged the exterior boards of the structure. Several trees were knocked down and deep gouges and mounds of silt marked the parking lot and access road.

As if Irene wasn't enough, the leftover rain from Hurricane Lee flooded the area again, not much more than a week later. This time, the storms caused wires to arc from more fallen trees and the breach caused by the Stony Brook widened to allow even more water to run into the canal. Fortunately, the basement at PMCH was all that flooded from the rain from Lee, but this pushed back clean-up efforts that were underway at the house.

As a result of the flooding, the house's kitchen addition needed to be gutted, as the wooden floor boards and wall slats had begun to warp and had the potential to grow mold. All items in the basement were lost, including a washing machine, dryer, hot water heater, furnace, and wooden shelves.

The Society is grateful that the D&R Canal State Park personnel have moved quickly to clean up the water damage, treat for mold and repair the parking area as well as take the time to consult with the Society on other needed repairs.

Since the damage was so extensive, we are beginning a fund raising campaign to help pay for the repairs, landscaping and new appliances. Any additional funds raised will be put toward other needed repairs, such as painting the exterior of the house and rehabilitating the outhouse. Please see the last page of this news letter for a donation form or visit our website, www.theLhs.org.

Flood water from Hurricane Irene at Port Mercer Canal House. The kitchen addition is on the left, with water about four feet deep.

To see more photos of the flooding, see our website at www.theLhs.org

Photo: Mike Milewski



The Lawrence Historical Society
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Return Service Requested

Current Resident or:



Places in Time is published four times a year by the Lawrence Historical Society. Back issues are available at the LHS website—www.TheLHS.org. Contributors for this issue: Rina Banerjee (editor), Dennis Waters, Mike Milewski and Laura Nawrocik. We can be contacted at the following address: webmaster@thelhs.org. The Lawrence Historical Society received an operating support grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State.

Help Repair Port Mercer Canal House!

Lawrence Historical Society is facing some hefty bills to repair the damage caused by Hurricanes Irene and Lee at Port Mercer Canal House. Please consider a donation to help us make the needed repairs. Any additional monies raised will go towards other needed repairs, particularly the repainting of the exterior and rehabilitation of the outhouse. You may use the form below or see our website to make an online donation. Thank you!

I would like to donate to the Repair the Canal House Fund:

_____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$30 _____ \$25 _____ \$15 Other: _____

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Make check payable to: The Lawrence Historical Society, PO Box 6025, Lawrence Township, NJ 08648
The Lawrence Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Dues and donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.