

Places In Time

LAWRENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2010

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION MAY 21 AND 22

Ten years since restoration of Brearley House to be marked by
Benefit Cocktail Party and Free Family Fair

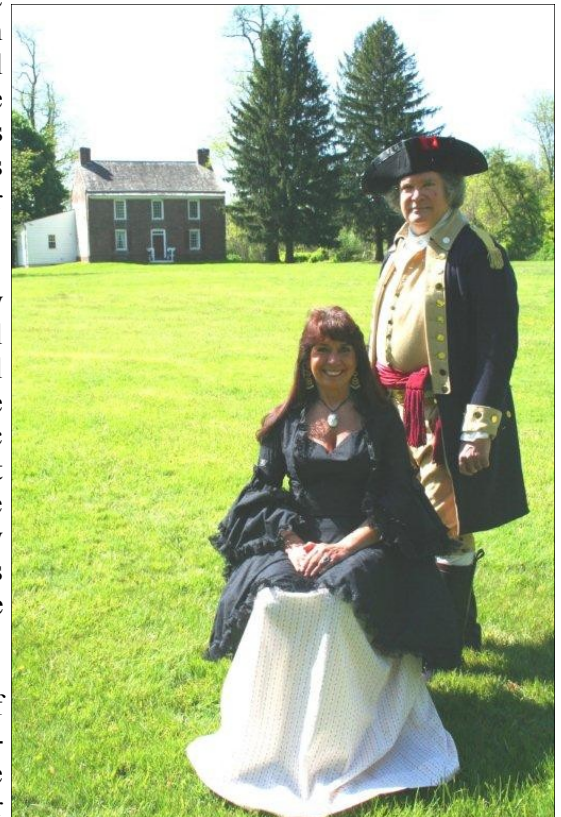
by Janet Bickal

On May 5, 2000, the Lawrence Historical Society celebrated the restoration of the 1761 Brearley House, and this year we will do so again. The \$700,000 needed to restore the historic house gave us all a beautiful 18th century Georgian farmhouse. In the interval, the house has served as headquarters for the Lawrence Historical Society, welcomed hundreds of visitors at its monthly open house tours, and hosted countless more celebrants every New Year's Eve at our wildly popular Hogmanay bonfire. In each of those ten years, all the second graders from Eldridge Park School have paid us a visit. For seven of those years, every eighth grade student in Lawrence Middle School worked side by side with professional archeologists uncovering the historic and pre-historic past of the Great Meadow. The house and its spacious meadow have served as the setting for scores of private parties from a quiet New Year's Day wedding party of four to a black tie gala for four hundred.

This year, the Lawrence Historical Society will mark the tenth anniversary with two events. On Friday evening, May 21, a benefit cocktail party will raise much-needed funds for the continuing care of this old house. As all who have ever lived in an old house know, costly upkeep never ends. We are deeply grateful to our landlord, Lawrence Township, whose Public Works Department has maintained the grounds and the infrastructure, but the interior décor is the responsibility of the Society. It has become necessary to re-plaster all the walls, a very costly procedure. The Friday party will raise funds from ticket sales, a silent auction, and business sponsors. We are most thankful for the major support of our long-time benefactor, Educational Testing Service.

This year's festivities have the additional distinction of the participation of members of the Brearley family, especially Candice Brearley, a well-known designer and artist. Candice has done an acrylic portrait of the house, which she has donated to the Society, and an exhibition of her paintings will be a feature of the weekend. She has graciously offered to donate a percentage of any sales made during the show. Another Brearley descendent, Jack Koeppel of Pennington, has offered to loan the Brearley House a magnificent Chippendale style chair that has been in his family since the 18th century. It was made in Philadelphia by the same cabinet maker who made the desk on which Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence.

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Candice Brearley and Bill Agress, as homeowner John Brearley, in front of the 1762 Brearley House. Ms. Brearley's art will be featured during the 10th anniversary weekend and Mr. Agress will be hosting the family fair on Saturday.

LHS Plans More Events for 2010

On June 13, we will host our annual Garden Party at Port Mercer Canal House. Join us from 2:00pm-4:00pm for music, ice cream and lemonade on the patio. The house will be open for tours.

In the fall, we will be hosting a tea party at Port Mercer Canal House in September. October will see the 7th Annual Mary Tanner Lecture (speaker and venue TBA) and Death and Dying Throughout History, a set of mini-plays at Brearley House. In November, we will be co-hosting, with the Friends of the Lawrence Library, a workshop on preserving photos featuring archivist Gary Saretzky.

As always, we will cap off the year with our annual Hogmanay Bonfire in the Great Meadow at Brearley House. The fire starts at 6:00pm on New Year's Eve and is great fun for the whole family.

We Are looking For...

...a copy of a book or booklet published about Eldridge Park. We have heard about a publication that was produced by a Colavita family member and details the history of the neighborhood, but do not have one in the township historical collection. While we would love to have an original, we would also be pleased to get a photocopied version just to get the information into the collection. Please contact us if you can help us out.

We could also use photographs or information about any other topics related to Lawrence history. If you have something to share but do not want to part with your originals, we can make arrangements to scan or copy the material. We would really like information on the various subdivisions, immigration/ethnic heritage, and long-forgotten businesses.

Looking Back: How Far We've Come!

One of the photos of Brearley House with the fence will go here, with a caption. Right now it is late and I don't feel like scanning it.

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On Saturday, May 22, from eleven to three, we will hold a Free Family Fair. Attractions for children will include a story-time and craft conducted by the youth services librarians of the Lawrence Headquarters Branch of the Mercer County Library System and 18th century games led by Pastor John Allen of Old First Presbyterian Church in Trenton. Children of all ages will be invited to dance around a May-Pole and to join in with the Millstone River Morris Dancers and Handsome Molly in their boisterous cavorting. Adults can turn their unwanted gold and silver trinkets to cash with Time Traveler Antiques dealer Tom Petrino, who will be on hand all day to sell and purchase gold, silver, coins, watches, diamonds, silver flatware etc. Mr. Petrino will donate 20% of his proceeds to our organization. Music will be provided by our dear friend Graham Kronk, bagpiper and fiddler. Those seeking enlightenment as well as entertainment can spend time with demonstrations of such 18th century activities as weaving, quilting, and chair caning. Ian Burrow, an archeologist from Hunter Research, will do a demonstration dig similar to the many such digs done in the Great Meadow over the years by students of Lawrence Middle School. A historic dressmaker will illustrate and model the kind of clothing 18th century women wore.

Prior to the fair, join us at the Port Mercer Canal House for a walk along the towpath and trail to Brearley House, set to start at 9:30am. The walk, which will be conducted by Vicki Chirco, Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park historian, will begin with a brief tour of the Port Mercer Canal House. Registration is suggested, please see our website for more details.

Food and beverages will be on sale as well as souvenirs such as jigsaw puzzles of the Brearley House and the Brearley coat of arms.

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Vereen Papers Added To Historical Collection

The Lawrence Township Historian's Office recently received an invaluable donation to the historical collection housed in the Winona Nash Room at the Lawrence Headquarters Branch of the Mercer County Library System. Fred Vereen donated his collection of personal papers that cover a lifetime of work dedicated to Civil Rights and affordable housing in the township. Mr. Vereen's papers include newspaper clippings, meeting minutes, photographs, newsletters and letters detailing the building of Eggerts Crossing Village and the Lawrence Neighborhood Service Center.

The society and historian's office were aided in the arranging and preserving of the papers by our spring intern, Ashley Morris, a Rider University senior majoring in education and history. Ms. Morris worked with Mr. Vereen and Edith Pike to collect the papers so future generations can have access to a unique collection of first-person resources for research projects.

The papers are still being arranged by the historian's office and there are plans to create a display at the library in October to celebrate Lawrence History Month.

Society Launches New Website, Blog and E-mail List

Stop by www.thelhs.org to see our new look. In addition to a cleaner look, we have added a blog where we will post articles about Lawrence history and a new automated mailing list to keep you informed about upcoming events and society news. If you want to write for our blog, contact us.