

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASBURY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Where the Past
Meets the Future*

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A Year to Remember for the APHS *New Faces, Successful Projects, and a Permanent Home for the Historical Society in 2015*

For the members of the Historical Society, 2015 was a year capped by the successful completion of two long-running endeavors: the acquisition of **The Stephen Crane House** as our first permanent headquarters, and the naming of the house to the State and National Historical Registers. Along the way, there were numerous popular events, new faces on the APHS board — and a raised public profile that finds the Society taking its place as a unique voice for the preservation and promotion of the city's architectural and cultural heritage.

New Trustees at the Table

The past year saw three of our longtime associates on the Society's Board of Trustees leave for reasons of other professional commitments — including **John Moor**, who took office as Asbury Park's first directly elected Mayor in January. His regretful resignation was followed by those of **Donna Troppoli** (who was named to a position on the city's Housing Authority) and **David Sobotka**, who chaired the Crane House historic nomination effort. New to the table were **Frank D'Alessandro**, longtime private owner of the Crane House, and **Andy Skokos** — with the new



members joining APHS president **Don Stine**, vice president **Jim Henry**, and fellow board members **Mary Damato**, **Eileen Chapman**, **Teddy Chomko**, **Kay Harris**, **Susan Rosenberg** and **Jennifer Schulman**. An additional trustee will be nominated and voted upon — and all of our past board members will be honored — during the Society's annual Reorganization Meeting, held Thursday evening, January 28 at the **Asbury Park Public Library**.

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...and a Look Ahead to the New Year



Is it true that Sunset Lake is shaped like the state of New Jersey? Get a whole new perspective on our parks, beaches, downtown businesses and public institutions, when APHS president Don Stine presents images of *Asbury from the Air*, from the earliest days of aviation to the recent past. The public is invited to enjoy the slideshow plus refreshments at 7 p.m. on January 28, during the Historical Society's annual Reorganization Meeting at the Library.

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APHS President Don Stine is pictured with the original sign from The Turf Club, during Charlie and Pam Horner's winter 2015 exhibit of Asbury Park music memorabilia at Monmouth University. The sign, which resides now at the Asbury Park Senior Center directly across the street from the onetime location of Leo Karp's Springwood Avenue landmark, was beautifully restored (in a job donated by Allied Environmental Signage), and made its flashy debut at the Horners' summer/fall SPIRITUALS TO SOUL installation at the County Historical Association.

A Milestone Move

Following an extraordinarily generous offer by Frank D'Alessandro (owner of The Stephen Crane House since 2001) — as well as a fundraising campaign that welcomed similarly generous gifts from Two River Theater founders **Joan and Robert Rechnitz** and other donors — the Historical Society was finally able to close on the former Arbutus Cottage in October 2015. Attorney **Mark Williams** assisted Jim Henry in the “condo-ization” process, in which D'Alessandro retains ownership of the rear cottage (the onetime carriage house of the property at 508 Fourth Avenue) as his residence. Before the closing, the APHS received an amazing and long-awaited housewarming gift from the State of New Jersey, with the announcement of the Crane House's addition to the State and National Registries of Historic Places (see story on page 3).

Music, Art Happenings

Homegrown sounds, visual art, words and photographs continued to play a major role in the Historical Society's public activities in 2015, with trustee Teddy Chomko and volunteers presenting another successful edition of the **Art on the Boardwalk** show on

August 16. The Public Library was the setting for a July slideshow presentation and signing keyed to the new book *Legendary Locals of Asbury Park* — and the APHS made many new friends and maintained a visible presence at events that ranged from the annual Oysterfest to the county's Archives Day.

Still, it was the rich musical heritage of the city's West Side — and the tire-



During the Nov. 1st Open House party at the Crane House, Ray Sternesky offered a mini-exhibit of paintings spotlighting historic buildings and other scenes of Asbury Park. The veteran artist donated an oil of the Carousel House (the same image used as the Society's banner logo) to the Society as a housewarming gift.

less efforts of collectors, curators and music historians **Charlie and Pam Horner** — that best served to keynote an eventful year. The Horners were joined by fellow APHS members in setting up an intimate exhibit of gospel/ jazz/ soul/ R&B photos, records and memorabilia at downtown Asbury's **Heaven Art & Antiques** at the start of 2015. It was a prelude to a larger “Springwood Harmony” installation at **Monmouth University** in February; one that boasted as its centerpiece the original BAR sign from Springwood Avenue nightspot **The Turf Club**.

The fully restored sign lit up the room to great applause in Summer 2015 (capping a restoration effort made possible by the APHS through the donated services of **Allied Environmental Signage**), this time at the heart of Charlie and Pam's “Spirituals to Soul” exhibit at the museum of the **Monmouth County Historical Association**. The contributions and legacy of Asbury Park's great vocal groups, musicians, club owners and impresarios were celebrated, in an interactive display that spotlighted the photography of the late **Joseph Carter Sr.**

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A Special Honor for Arbutus Cottage

It's a project that took nearly 20 years to complete — if you take into consideration the fact that the initial groundwork was done during the 1990s tenure of former Stephen Crane House owner **Tom Hayes**, who purchased and saved the 1878 Arbutus Cottage from demolition in 1995.

While Hayes, his friend (and future Crane House owner) Frank D'Alessandro and others assembled historical research notes, floor plans and vintage insurance maps, the effort to get the property at 508 Fourth Avenue declared an official historic site was shelved for another day. Early in 2014, that day dawned anew, when the Asbury Park Historical Society formed a committee to see the project through to completion, in anticipation of their taking ownership of the house in 2015.

Board member and professional engineer David Sobotka coordinated the detail-intensive effort, which drew upon the energies of fellow trustee and retired librarian Susan Rosenberg (who did extensive research at Syracuse University, home to Stephen Crane's archives), as well as Crane House "writer in residence" **Tom Chesek**, who composed the house histories and other documents required for the project. Valuable input was furnished by D'Alessandro, as well as by Asbury Park City Historian **Werner Baumgartner**, who did much of the hands-on work to the house's infrastructure during its journey from boarded-up derelict to cherished community resource.

Numerous photographs were taken; floor plans were annotated, and an initial presentation was made to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Historic Preservation in spring 2014. The DEP's **Bob Craig** and **Kat Cannelongo** visited the house for an extensive tour in late spring, and a fine-tuned presentation was made to the Preservation panel by Sobotka's committee that July.



Asbury Park City Historian Werner Baumgartner, Historic Nomination Committee Chair David Sobotka, and Historical Society trustee Susan Rosenberg are pictured during their July 2014 presentation to the New Jersey DEP's Office of Historic Preservation in Trenton.

In letters to Sobotka, Chesek, D'Alessandro and Rosenberg dated September 3, 2015, the DEP's **Daniel D. Saunders** announced that Arbutus Cottage "was entered into the New Jersey Register of Historic Places on February 16, 2015," and "entered into the National Register of Historic Places on August 18, 2015." The citation was based upon the house's unique association with the great American author Crane (whose Newark birthplace is no longer standing), as well as his mother **Mary Helen Peck Crane** and her pioneering social activist work in the late 19th century.

The historic site status allows the APHS greater access to available preservation grants, and the opportunity to expand the capabilities of this local treasure as a museum, arts venue and meeting facility in the years to come.

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Open House, Open Doors

On Saturday, November 1 — not coincidentally, the 144th birthday of **Stephen Crane** himself — the Society celebrated its acquisition of the historic house at 508 Fourth Avenue with an Open House that attracted more than 150 APHS members, new neighbors and history buffs to the place where the future author of *The Red Badge of Courage* lived and began his writing career. Guests enjoyed Teddy Chomko's culinary creations, a custom cake donated by The Chocolate Carousel of Wall, a slideshow on the house's history by Susan Rosenberg, plus guided tours and a rare one-time look at a circa-1900 real estate atlas from the Sanborn company. It was an exciting start to the

Society's stewardship of Arbutus Cottage, and a prelude to a slate of year-end events that included Frank D'Alessandro's 14th annual Season's Readings program; a classic film series curated by former Mayor **Ed Johnson**, and the premiere of a "radio play" adapted from the Crane short story *The Reluctant Voyagers*.

Bright Lights, Big City

The Society's busy and productive year 2015 came to a festive close on December 6, with a welcome holiday tradition: the annual NYC Bus Trip co-sponsored by the APHS and the **Historical Society of Ocean Grove**. Guests enjoyed a visit to the Holiday Bazaar at Bryant Park, a look at major store displays, the tree at Rockefeller Center, plus a four-course lunch in Little Italy.

A Look Ahead to the New Year

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All Society members and neighbors are invited to join the APHS trustees for this first meeting of 2016, during which new board members will be nominated and voted upon, the organization's bylaws will be discussed, and the public will be able to learn more about the work of the Society (at the Crane House as well as in the greater community), and its vision for the coming year.

Lasting approximately 30 minutes and drawn from the collections of **Kate Mellina** and other Asburyphile collectors, the Asbury from the Air presentation was inspired by the life and career of the late **Edward Noumair**, the longtime Asbury Park businessman (and official school photographer) who passed away on December 5, 2015 at the age of 94. The World War Two veteran learned the skill of aerial photography during his service, and would revisit that passion later in civilian life; taking numerous

shots of Asbury Park from small aircraft, and eventually seeing the first professional gallery exhibit of his work when he was in his tenth decade.

A reminder also that our friends the Horners will be presenting **A Night of Acapella Harmony** on February 20, inside the **Pollak Theatre** at Monmouth University. Featured in the 7 pm program will be some of the finest vocal combos from New York (**The Tee-Tones**), Jersey City (**Choice**), and Philly (**Quiet Storm**) — plus guest appearances by the legendary **Larry Chance** of The Earls, and (via video) the grandson of the late great Orioles founder Sonny Till.

Tickets for the Saturday night concert of classic street-corner soul are priced at \$25 and \$35, and can be reserved online at www.monmouth.edu/arts, or by calling the Performing Arts Box Office at 732-263-6889.

Share Your Love of Our City's History...Join the Asbury Park Historical Society or Renew Your Membership Today!

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Please volunteer for one of our committees by checking a category below. You will be contacted upon receipt of your membership application.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archive/ Artifacts | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget/ Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Preservations | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications: Website/ Newsletter/ Social Media | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal/ Grants/ Government Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Stephen Crane House |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

ANNUAL DUES (Dues paid in October, November and December 2015 are good for 2016):

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (age 65 and up) \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$150 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$500 | |

RENEWAL of existing membership? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Donation only: \$ _____ Thank You! PayPal: antichay@gmail.com

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Please make checks payable to: **ASBURY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
c/o The Stephen Crane House,
508 Fourth Ave., Asbury Park, NJ 07712