

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASBURY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**JOIN UP OR
RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP!**
See Page 4 for Details!

*Where the Past
Meets the Future*

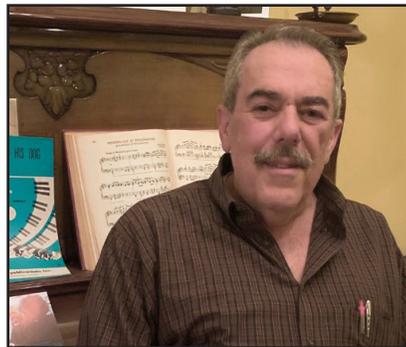
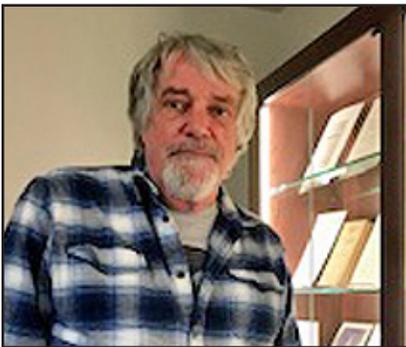
©R. Sternesky

© 2020 Asbury Park Historical Society

Winter 2020

Looking Back...and Moving Forward!

The APHS greets the new year with new faces and new programs



Honoring two great advocates of our city's history, as we prepare to welcome new officers and trustees

Mark your 2020 calendars for Thursday, January 16, when the **Asbury Park Historical Society** invites all current and prospective members to the first and biggest public meeting of the year. Hosted at 7 pm inside the **Asbury Park Public Library** at First and Grand Avenues, the annual Reorganization Meeting will be a significant one, during which voting will be conducted on the re-election of officers to the Board of Trustees for the new year — including a vacancy created by the retirement of outgoing president **Don Stine**.

A member of the Society's board since 2008, who has served as its president since 2012, the journalist, historian, and dealer in rare books has presided over a period of real advancement for the APHS, marked by the acquisition of its permanent headquarters at The Stephen Crane House, the naming of that 1878 house to the state and national registries of historic places, and the successful (and ongoing) refurbishment of its public spaces.

Also leaving the board is **Frank D'Alessandro**, the longtime private owner of the Crane House, who generously donated the property to the APHS in 2015. The retired educator, who spearheaded the house's development as a venue for public events and meetings, will have his unexpired term on the board filled by **Susan Skokos**, per the recommendation of the board's nominating committee. Skokos will assume oversight of the membership committee — taking over from that committee's previous chair, business owner, educator and Asbury Park Museum project director **Kay Harris**, whose interest in the presidency of the Historical Society will also be voted on.

Join us on January 16 to thank Don and Frank for their tremendous contributions, and wish them all success in their future endeavors! Refreshments will be served at the event, with volunteers on hand to facilitate membership sign-ups and renewals.

A rock and roll riot, and a reorganization, at our annual meeting on Jan. 16

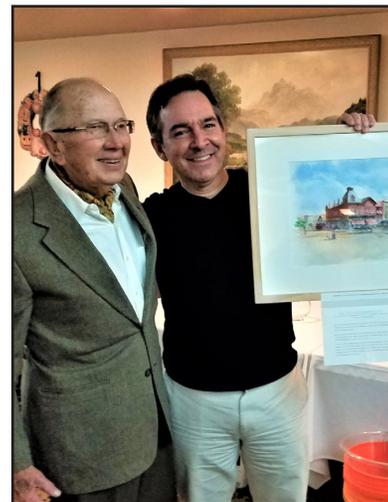
Hard as it is to believe, there was a time when Asbury Park was "The City That Banned Rock and Roll" — and the reason was the June 1956 event that brought hit-makers **Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers** (pictured) to Convention Hall; an aborted show that devolved into what many consider to be the nation's first "rock and roll riot." When the APHS convenes for its annual Reorganization Meeting on January 16, 2020, the real story behind that infamous incident will be the subject of an entertaining and informative multi-media presentation by **Charlie and Pam Horner**, the celebrated musicologists, collectors and promoters who were among the inaugural recipients of our Asbury Heroes awards this past October. The founders of **Classic Urban Harmony LLC** (and tireless supporters of the Society's programs) recently completed work on the first of *two* volumes of their comprehensive book on the rich musical legacy of Asbury Park's West Side — so stay tuned for details on this exciting and long-awaited project!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ANNUAL 50/50 WINNER!

At the monthly meeting of the Historical Society on November 21, **Sandra De Murley** was chosen as the winner of our 2019 50/50 raffle, with the Allenhurst resident awarded \$445, half of the total \$890 pot. Cheers to Sandra; our greatest thanks to all who participated in the fundraiser...and stay tuned for updates on our 2020 campaign!

Visit Our Website at www.aphistoricalociety.org

A night to remember, with a group of Asbury Heroes...



On the evening of Thursday, October 10, the Asbury Park Historical Society paid tribute to some of the “Asbury Heroes” who have made the care, promotion, and preservation of our city’s most treasured landmarks, resources, and cultural heritage their passion and calling. Hosted at longtime local favorite **Jimmy’s Italian Restaurant** on Asbury Avenue, and emceed by **Joseph Lemme**, the **APHS Awards Dinner** honored (from left in picture) **Don McLain** of the city’s Department of Public Works with the Community Service Award for his devotion to the maintenance of Asbury Park’s top-rated public beach, while music historians **Charlie and Pam Horner** shared the Distinguished Historian Award for bringing the West Side’s rich musical heri-

tage to the attention of new generations. Asbury Park Public Library director **Robert Stewart** received the Historic Stewardship Award for his decades of public service at the historic community resource — and **Thomas Hayes** shared with his wife **Regina** the Historic Preservation Award for their rescue and rehabilitation of what is now The Stephen Crane House. Together with a gift auction featuring items and services from many of the area’s leading merchants (plus the auction of a donated painting by **Ray Sternesky**, pictured with winner **John Ogrodnick**), ticket sales helped raise a total of \$2,099 for the programs of the APHS. Follow the Society for updates on the next edition of what we hope will become a highly anticipated annual happening!

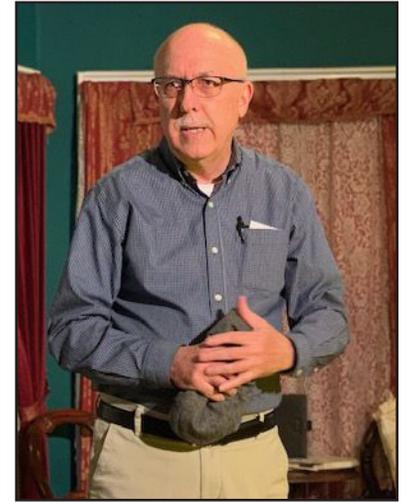


On Monday September 9, *Kindred Spirits* hosts **Amy Bruni** and **Adam Berry** joined **Kathy Kelly** (center) of Asbury Park’s **Paranormal Books & Curiosities** at The Stephen Crane House, for an episode dedicated to the mystery of the SS Morro Castle, and the infamous maritime disaster that marked its 85th anniversary in the summer of 2019. The cameras rolled as the guests (who also traded ghost stories with some of our young neighbors) discussed the ongoing questions surrounding the burning of the New York-bound liner, and its grounding just off the beach at Asbury Park in 1934. The crew of the cable-TV supernatural investigation series also visited the Paramount Theatre at Convention Hall (which did duty as storage space for victims’ bodies), and other area sites, for the episode produced for airing in an upcoming season of *Kindred Spirits*. It was the second trip to the Crane House for Amy, who was part of the crew from SyFy Network’s *Ghost Hunters* series during their visit in 2010.

On the evening of Thursday, September 26, the APHS invited attendees to “take a deep dive back in history,” as they hosted **Roger Champagne** in a special lecture on *How to Research Your Property*. Presented at the **Asbury Park Public Library**, the free program found the city resident demonstrating how homeowners and renters can use public records, online newspaper archives, and other easily accessible resources to create a dedicated binder that will serve as a “biography” of the places they call home. Illuminating his presentation with stories of his own experiences in buying, renovating, and researching his Emory Street residence, Champagne (pictured) covered such topics as researching health records; compiling a deed history; contacting descendants of previous owners; searching for census records, city maps, insurance maps, blueprints or permits, and exploring newspaper records for details of the previous occupants’ personal milestones, social activities, and occasional headline-worthy doings. If you currently reside in a local home that dates back 100 years or more, the Society encourages you to contact us toward the future goal of establishing a historic house tour of Asbury Park.

Follow the Asbury Park Historical Society and The Stephen Crane House on Facebook

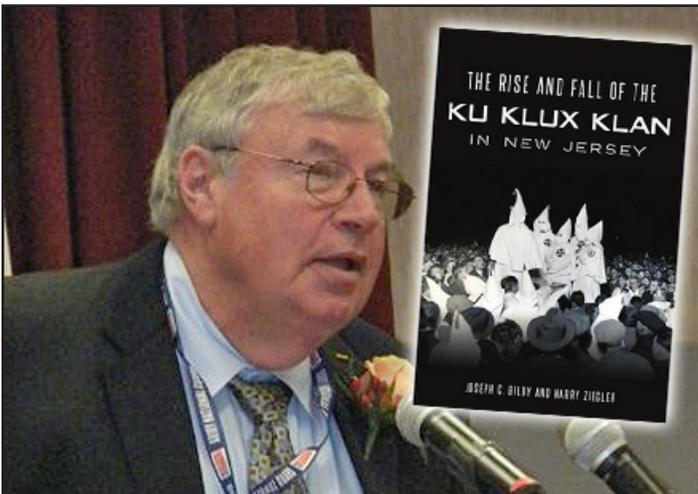
...and a homecoming weekend for Stephen Crane!



On the weekend of November 16 and 17, all of us at the onetime home of Mrs. Mary Helen Peck Crane were pleased and privileged to welcome a very special “homecoming” visitor — none other than Mrs. Crane’s youngest son Stephen, as channeled by professional actor **Ryan Hunt** (center) for three performances of *Evening with Stephen Crane*.

Audiences that included U.S. Congressman **Frank Pallone** (pictured at left, with APHS trustee and event sponsor **Susan Rosenberg**) were spellbound by the one-man show from Kentucky-based playwright **Phil Paradis** (right); a fascinating monologue drawn from the *Red Badge of Courage* author’s writings and incidents in his too-brief but eventful life.

The presentation served as the New Jersey premiere of the play celebrating the “True Jerseyman” who resided at the former Arbutus Cottage as a teen; writing his first short stories and poems under its roof, while honing his craft as a reporter for his brother Townley’s city-based news service. It also marked the culmination of a Fall Theater Series that spotlighted new solo shows by past Crane House performers **Geoff Shields**, **Rock Wilk**, and Broadway-screen actor **Bill Timoney**. Complete with set and costumes, *Evening with Stephen Crane* was among the most popular events presented to date inside the house’s “black box” Lecture Room, a performance space for which a slate of improvements is on the agenda for Fall 2020!



One of the darkest (and often, officially overlooked) eras in Garden State history was given a frank and unflinching discussion on the evening of Thursday, October 17, when the APHS hosted historians and authors **Joseph Bilby** (pictured) and **Harry Ziegler** in a presentation keyed to the publication of their most recent book, *The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in New Jersey*. A large and attentive audience gathered to hear the frequent collaborators’ illuminating talk on the (not widely known) impact of the white supremacist organization on our region’s politics and commerce; its resurgence in the earlier years of the 20th century (thanks in part to the advocacy of U.S. President and former New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson), and the regrettable fact that the Jersey Shore could lay claim to what’s been called the largest KKK gathering in American history. The authors, both collectively and individually, of more than 20 volumes and numerous articles on New Jersey topics — including several with a focus on Asbury Park and the Monmouth County Shore — Bilby and Ziegler have been frequent guests of the Historical Society during our special programs at the historic Library building on First Avenue.



On Sunday, December 8, more than 100 sightseers took part in the **New York City Christmas Lights Tour**, with the annual “fun”raiser (a co-presentation of the APHS and the **Ocean Grove Historical Society**) offering *two* full buses of participants a guided tour of several Manhattan sites in their full seasonal glory. Included were the Macy’s building, Bryant Park, Columbus Circle, and of course the tree at Rockefeller Center. A full luncheon in Little Italy was also included with the tour reservation, while trustee **Teddy Chomko** (pictured at center, with **Terry Ann Bonner** and **Joseph Lemme**) served once more as skipper for the day of shopping, sightseeing, and trekking the lights fantastic that netted \$964 for the programs of the Historical Society!

Public Programs at The Stephen Crane House

Beginning January 2020, the Stephen Crane House will welcome **Tom Chesk** as the new director of all programming and public activities at the State and National Historic Site. Tom, who has lived at 508 Fourth Avenue as writer-in-residence since the summer of 2011, will be taking over from **Frank D'Alessandro**, the longtime private owner and steward of the house once known as Arbutus Cottage...as well as looking after things on behalf of the Asbury Park Historical Society, to whom the retiring board trustee generously donated the property in 2015.

The author of the book *Legendary Locals of Asbury Park*, a board member of the Asbury Park Museum Project, and a veteran journalist who produces and edits the weekly arts sections of *The Coaster* and *The Link* newspapers, Chesk pledged in a statement "to carry on the good work and generous spirit established by Frank D'Alessandro and his predecessors Thomas and Regina Hayes, whose rescue of the property will mark its 25th anniversary in the coming year."

As the "flagship" public face of the Historical Society, the Crane House serves the community in three ways: as a venue for arts events (including film screenings, plays, poetry/ story readings, music performances, and more); as a meeting place for such locally based organizations as The Dialogue Group and Asbury Park TV...and as a tour destination for schools, clubs, and other groups (as well as the numerous individuals who drop in during weekly Sunday open house hours).

Having created and produced original "radio plays" inside the house's Lecture Room theater, presented slideshow lectures on historical and

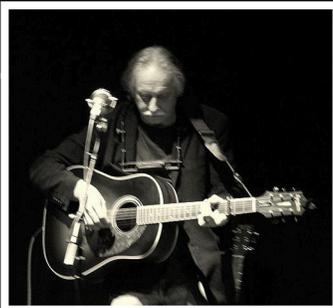
entertainment topics, and personally welcomed guests from all over North America and the world beyond, Tom has been well versed in the operations and upkeep of the Crane House; taking an instrumental role in the successful effort to have the house listed in the historic registry and serving as longtime assistant to his onetime high school math teacher D'Alessandro. The 60 year old native of Middletown Township, who resides at the house with his wife, registered nurse and certified fitness instructor **Diana Moore**, observed that his years at 508 Fourth "have afforded me a ringside seat on a fascinating and frenetic period of transformation and transition in our seaside city; allowing me to research, write, and lecture...and to make the acquaintance of a fairly astonishing array of people, representing all aspects of AP's roller-coaster past, present, and future."

"In the months to come, I also plan to explore some different types of public offerings...including music, poetry, and theatrical fare representing a wide cross-section of our area's cultural landscape," he continued, adding that "I'll be looking to establish new partnerships with other educational and nonprofit entities... including having The Stephen Crane House serve as co-presenter of events that take place elsewhere in Monmouth County and other New Jersey locales."

"Ideas are always welcome as we work to maintain and expand the Crane House's standing as a unique cultural gem and community resource."



On Saturday, December 14, **Frank D'Alessandro** and friends presented the 19th (and, sadly, final) annual edition of **Season's Readings from the Crane House**. An Asbury Park tradition since the turn of the eventful new century, the smorgasbord of stories, songs, and surprises was a gathering of friends (plus our extended "family" of longtime supporters and neighbors) that once again filled our collection boxes for the 2019 Asbury Park Toy Drive, and assembled the talents of (pictured left to right) Mr. D'Alessandro, Sophie Virgilio, Eric Revilla, Marie Castro, Geoff Shields, Grace Modla, Maureen Nevin, and Joyce Grant.



SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 2020 at 3 PM:

Join **George Wirth** at the Crane House, as the veteran Shore-based singer and songwriter hosts a special edition of his long-running series of intimate house-party concerts, keyed to the annual **Light of Day Winterfest** slate of fundraising music events. George welcomes his fellow musickers **Regina Goldy** and **Frank Patrouch** in "Songwriters at the Crane House for Light of Day," an afternoon of acoustic sounds, with doors opening at 2:30 pm, and a suggested donation of \$10 dedicated to the LOD Foundation's ongoing campaign for Parkinson's Disease research.

Contact us on Facebook or at aphistoricalociety.org

The Asbury Park Historical Society

Call the Stephen Crane House at **732-361-0189**

to schedule a tour...and address correspondence to:

Asbury Park Historical Society, 508 Fourth Ave., Asbury Park, NJ 07712

