

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASBURY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**JOIN UP OR
RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP!**

See Page 4 for Details!

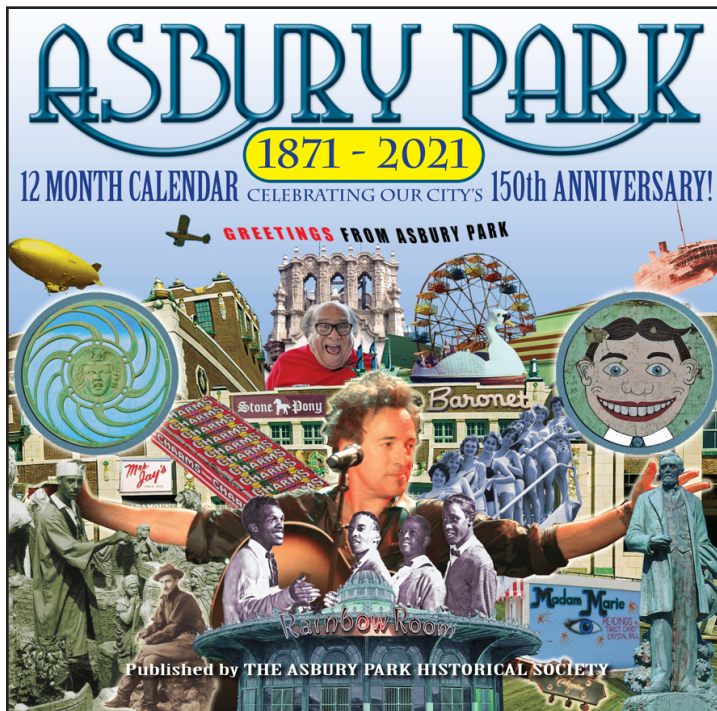
*Where the Past
Meets the Future*

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A Milestone Year...a Mission to Unify!

***Time's Running Out! Order Your
2021 Wall Calendar TODAY!***



As Asbury Park approaches the 150th anniversary of its 1871 founding, the city's Historical Society has announced that it will be marking that "sesqui-centennial" milestone with the publication of a commemorative item that's being pitched as "a perfect gift for anyone who's ever lived in or simply loved the place Where the City Meets the Sea."

Lavishly illustrated with dozens of memorable photographs, and highlighted by more than 300 significant dates from the 150-year timeline — as well as a special section on the "pre-history" of the coastal community — the "AP150" Wall Calendar for 2021 documents Asbury Park's "roller-coaster" ride through the years, from its mapping out by visionary planner (and self-appointed moral crusader) James A. Bradley, to the new century that saw the "zombie" city re-emerge into the spotlight as one of America's Best Places to Travel. Representing a twelve-month guided tour that takes on the people, the places, and the headline-making events that helped write the story of the still-young city, the calendar "captures the spirit of a place that's managed to pack more history into its relatively brief 150 years than many American towns could claim in centuries of existence," in the words of APHS trustee Tom Chesek.

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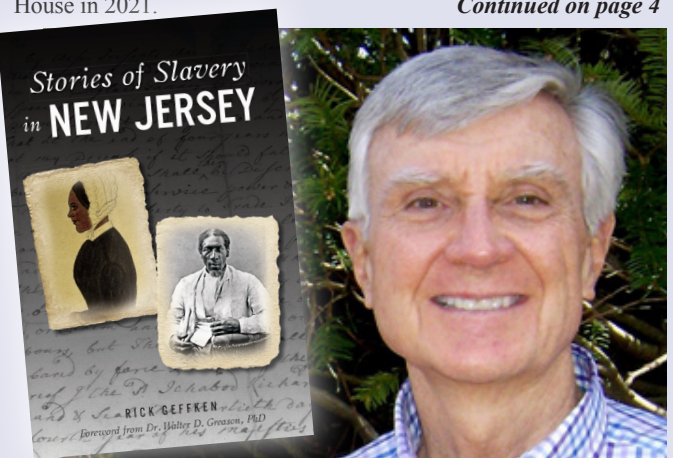
***Join us for our first (virtual)
meetings this Jan. and Feb.!***

Each third Thursday in January, the Asbury Park Historical Society has traditionally invited the public to its first and biggest monthly meeting of the year, hosted at the city's Public Library — a special event that's featured guest speaker presentations, book signings, and complimentary refreshments. With the ongoing public health emergency continuing to cast a shadow over indoor gatherings, however, the Society is instead inviting all interested members of the public to "zoom in," for our first *virtual* annual meeting.

Scheduled for 7 pm on January 21st, 2021, the event allows all interested members of the Historical Society the option to access the meeting in real time as a live streamed offering, or to view the proceedings at a later date. Society officers will address members regarding the activities of the APHS in meeting the considerable challenges of 2020, as well as the organization's direction as we move forward into the new year. In addition, seats on the Board of Trustees that are up for renewal in 2021 will be voted upon (*note: only current paid members are able to vote for board candidates*).

In lieu of a live presentation, the Society will offer a special video on the history of our headquarters at 508 Fourth Avenue, the historic site that marks the 25th anniversary of its rebirth as The Stephen Crane House in 2021.

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Author Rick Geffken, who gave a presentation based on his book "Lost Amusement Parks of the Jersey Shore" at our 2018 annual meeting, returns on February 18 for a virtual event based on his new book "Stories of Slavery in New Jersey." Keep it tuned to our website for details!

Visit Our Website at www.aphistoricalociety.org

A 21st century street project uncovers a long-lost track... a path back to the days of the city's electric trolley line



An electric trolley car (at far left) works its route past the F.W. Woolworth store on Cookman Avenue, in this circa 1914 postcard image.

Story and photographs by Susan Rosenberg • Special thanks to John Moor, Steve Merlin, and Mike Manzella

In the decades between its 1874 incorporation as a borough of Ocean Township, and its emergence as a self-governing city in 1897, Asbury Park grew by leaps and bounds; capturing the attention of the nation, blazing new trails, and becoming a model of civic planning and infrastructure.

The planned community founded by James A. Bradley would become the first area town to install a local telephone system in 1881, while the same year saw the construction of a sewer/ sanitation system that was then considered a vanguard example of municipal engineering. The town's fast-growing waterfront would be the first on the Jersey Shore to light its boardwalk with electricity in 1885, and two years later Asbury Park would begin construction of an electrified trolley system — the first place in the state of New Jersey to do so, and only the second in the United States after Richmond, Virginia.

Making its maiden run in 1888, the Sea Shore Electric Railway Company traced a circuit through numerous points along Main Street, Cookman Avenue, Kingsley Street, and Eighth Avenue. Stops would come to include the town's two busy railroad depots and the Eighth Avenue boat landing, with the streetcars crossing Sunset Lake via a trolley bridge on Emory Street. There were turnarounds near the present site of the Carousel House — and at Eighth Avenue and Emory Street, where the Asbury Park Shade Tree Commission maintains a street-island marker to this bygone form of public transit. A barn for the trolley cars occupied what would later become the site of a JCP&L storage facility on the north side of Deal Lake.

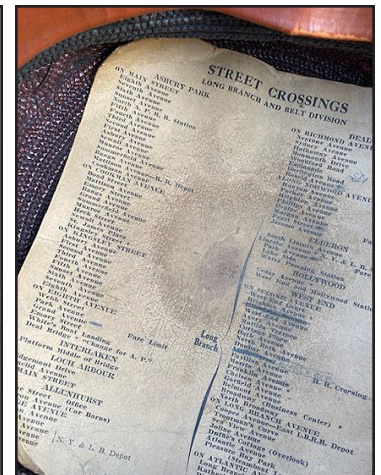
The 40-year heyday of the trolleys would eventually see the Asbury line connected to other sister streetcar lines between Long Branch and Sea Girt,

and Asbury Park's system continued to serve tourists and residents year-round, up to its final trip on October 22, 1931. With gas-powered vehicles taking their place as the dominant form of transportation, the trolley system (by then under the management of Coast Cities Railway Company) suffered financial failure, and a fleet of city buses would take over the existing trolley routes, with the old streetcar tracks being paved over.

Fast forward nearly 80 years into the future. The streets of Asbury Park boast newly designated bike lanes and improved pedestrian crossings; summer-season jitneys, electric scooter and bicycle rentals have emerged as new ways to get around town — and a still-ongoing road project is seeing major improvements to Main Street (NJ Route 71). As part of a Transit Village Initiative project with the state Department of Transportation and NJ Transit, the city undertook a much-needed revitalization of the sidewalks and curbside areas along Main — in the process bringing the early history of Asbury Park into the light of the 21st century, when the excavation work revealed the iron tracks and paving bricks of the trolley era.

Thanks to the diligence of personnel from the city's Public Works department, pieces of that historical era are being preserved. Sections of the metal tracks — which became intermittently visible through the years, beneath the asphalt of local streets — have been donated to the Asbury Park Historical Society and the Asbury Park Museum project, while efforts have been made to salvage some of the bricks from the 19th century streetscape. As the city continues to investigate ways of easing dependence upon gas-burning vehicular traffic — experimenting with car-free downtown blocks during the 2020 pandemic; installing electric car charging stations; working toward a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly street layout — we hear modern echoes of a time when the appearance of a noisy, sputtering motorcar was still a novelty, and people got about their day to the *clang, clang, clang* tune of the trolley bell.

Look for a more in-depth story on the history of Asbury Park's electrified trolley line in the new year, on our official website aphistoricalociety.org.



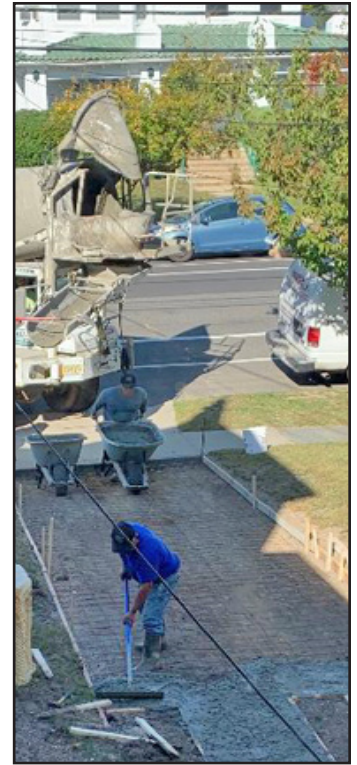
Deputy city manager Mike Manzella models an authentic circa-1920 conductor's cap owned by Asbury Park Mayor John Moor. The underside of the cap revealed a breakdown of local stops for the streetcars that once ran between Long Branch and Asbury Park.

APHS Annual Meeting *Cont. from page 1*

Then on Thursday, February 18, the APHS welcomes historian Rick Geffken for an encore appearance as special guest speaker, this time in a virtual presentation keyed to Black History Month and the release of his latest book, *Stories of Slavery in New Jersey*. The retired U.S. Army officer, executive, educator and author of the previously featured *Lost Amusement Parks of the Jersey Shore* will be making signed copies of the book available for purchase through our official website aphistoricalociety.org. Geffken will also offer signed copies of his recent collaboration with Christime Giordano Hanlon, *To Preserve and Protect: Profiles of the People Who Recorded the History and Heritage of Monmouth County, New Jersey* — a volume that includes APHS president Kay Harris among its profiled subjects. *Cont. on page 4*

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

Lights up!, on improvements at The Stephen Crane House



LEFT: Tree service specialists perform much-needed maintenance on the century-old oak in the rear of the Crane House property.

CENTER: APHS officers Jim Henry and Andy Skokos join city historian Werner Baumgartner to display the new track lighting and refinished floor in the Lecture Room theatre, as Nick Skokos (back of photo) continues work on the repainting.

RIGHT: Construction crews team up to give the house an all-new front driveway on the east side of the property.

Photos by Tom Chesek

From the hyper-local front to the international landscape, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected our lives in many significant ways — not the least of which is a newfound reconsideration of *home*, both the concept and the concrete reality. With pandemic-related closings, curtailings and curfews having cut to the heart of Asbury Park's social, civic and economic life — and with our own traditional yearly slate of arts events and public outreach programs placed on indefinite hiatus — the Asbury Park Historical Society looked homeward in 2020, toward our historic Stephen Crane House headquarters.

In the interest of the safety and well-being of our Crane House guests, all scheduled public events inside our Lecture Room were put on hold as of March 2020 — and, while it is our hope to bring many of the postponed programs to audiences at some point in 2021, the Society endeavored to turn a considerable negative into a positive; taking the opportunity to perform some long-overdue improvements on the intimate theatre that last presented a sold-out presentation of the one-woman play “Harriet Tubman’s Long Road to Freedom” in late February 2020.

With the donation of an unused piano to a local family and the removal of other furnishings, the “black box” performance space that has hosted countless classic film screenings, stage works, poetry readings, conferences and historical lectures has made room for additional seating — a necessity in a year that keynoted with a beyond-capacity acoustic music benefit for the Light of Day Foundation. As coordinated by APHS vice president Jim Henry through a matching grant from the Monmouth County Historical Commission, the room’s hardwood floors have been sanded and polished; the walls and ceiling have been given a fresh new coat of paint, and the installation of all-new track lighting and dimmer switches will allow for greater versatility in a venue that serves as both a small cinema and a meeting place for the Society and other organizations.

Elsewhere around the house, the many non-public storage and support areas within the former Arbutus Cottage came in for a massive cleanup

and reorganization effort during the long months of the shutdown, with particular attention being paid to an Archive Room which, when fully organized and curated, will hold materials from the Society’s collection (historic documents, maps, postcards, photographs, directories, ephemera and more) that will eventually be made available for examination by the public. Other works in progress include the furnishing of a renovated “Stephen’s Room” recreating the look of a Victorian-era boy’s bedroom; upgrades to the event reception room (the house’s original kitchen), as well as some welcome repairs and refreshes to such guest amenities as the first-floor kitchen and restrooms.

The changes in and around our State and National Historic Site extend to the property outside, with one much-anticipated improvement being an all new front driveway, replacing the crumbling and sinking concrete path that challenged many a guest’s vehicle in recent years. Completed in early October by locally based construction crews, the project allows easier access to the residential cottage at the rear of the property.

The fully refurbished former carriage house was occupied for years by Frank D’Alessandro, the retired educator who generously donated the Crane House to his fellow Historical Society trustees in 2015. D’Alessandro, who with husband Eric Revilla placed the back cottage on the market this past summer, also gifted the property with a much-needed “spa day” trimming for the venerable oak tree that sits in the common area between the houses that share the 508 Fourth Avenue address.

While the boughs of the tree that is possibly old enough to have shared this little patch of the world with the Crane family — and certainly old enough to have witnessed more than a century of this city’s roller-coaster history — no longer pose an immediate threat to the roofs of the houses, the oldest living denizen of our neighborhood soldiers on through this season of change, providing summer’s-day shade, a home for the local fauna, and a reliable point of reference amid the never-ending movement of time and tide.



APHS trustee Jennifer Rae Stine puts the finishing touches on the Crane House Christmas tree inside the Victorian-era parlor of the historic cottage, a tradition that has brightened the Fourth Avenue-facing windows each holiday season. Stop in on Sundays from 12 - 2 pm (masks are required), or make an appointment by calling 732-361-0189. Photo by Susan Rosenberg

2021 Wall Calendar *Cont. from page 1*

The author of the book "Legendary Locals of Asbury Park," Cheseck researched, wrote and designed the calendar as a fundraising vehicle for the programs of the Historical Society and its Stephen Crane House headquarters, during a pandemic in which "we had to cancel nearly all of our activities and events, from free movie matinees and plays at the Crane House, to our annual art show, holiday bus tours, and awards dinner."

That said, the Crane House programming director added that, in the absence of any official observance of the sesquicentennial, "we like to think of this project as a whirlwind trip through time, at a time when we're all keeping it close to home... a 'keeper' that should stick around long after the year 2021 enters the history books."

"Regardless of whether you're a daytripper or a nightlifer, a former resident, a new arrival, or one of the families who've made a longtime year-round home in this summer place, you'll find out lots of new and maybe even mind-blowing things about this one-of-a-kind town," said Cheseck.

Available for the duration of the holiday gift shopping season, copies of the AP150 Wall Calendar can be purchased via PayPal for \$19.99 each, plus \$6.00 shipping, from the nonprofit organization's website at **aphistorical-society.org**. Local customers can avoid the shipping charge by picking up their order at the Stephen Crane House (508 Fourth Avenue in Asbury Park), Saturdays and Sundays between 12 and 2 pm. The calendars are also available for sale at select retail outlets that include **Fun House** (Cookman Avenue and Convention Hall locations), **Gifts by Tina** (Ocean Grove), **Shore Antique Center** (Allenhurst), **Booktowne** (Manasquan), and **River Road Books** (Fair Haven).

Also available for purchase at the Crane House and Fun House stores are durable vinyl tote bags, custom created for the Historical Society, and featuring colorful reproductions of vintage postcard scenes of Asbury Park. With single-use plastic bags being phased out in many jurisdictions, these items (priced at \$10 each) are as useful as they are beautiful...a perfect encapsulation of our motto, *Where the Past Meets the Future!*



APHS Annual Meeting *Continued from page 2*

The January 21 meeting will be preceded by a membership sign-up/ renewal campaign, with those who normally register or renew in person at our live events offered the opportunity to do so online. Check our website at **aphistoricalsociety.org** or follow our social media pages for full details on our membership drive, as well as information on how to vote for board members at the conclusion of the meeting.

As Kay Harris explains, "The past nine months have encouraged all of us to adapt to these challenges in ways that have brought out the best of our creative problem-solving abilities."

"This virtual event will mark the first time that the general membership has been invited to participate in our meetings...and given that it may be several more months before the pandemic-related public gathering restrictions begin to relax, the APHS needs to pivot to 'the new normal' just as other public entities and private businesses have done."

"Our virtual meetings in the new year will encourage our membership to take a more active role," she continued. "And while we'll all be missing those refreshments, our aim is to give the full experience of our in-person events, as we work toward the day when we can once again invite the public to our special programs at the Crane House and elsewhere."

The Asbury Park Historical Society

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Join up or renew your membership today!

Contact **SUSAN SKOKOS**, *membership chair*, at skokose@aol.com

Donations accepted via PayPal at aphistoricalsociety.org

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

