

BROADSIDE

10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

June 1993

ABRIEF HISTORY OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WEST WINDSOR

by Joan S. Parry, President

Beginnings

It all began with Fanny Tett, our neighbor on the farm across Bear Brook Rd. Her family had lived in West Windsor since 1918. Fanny was a fund of anecdotes about life in "Old West Windsor," which, as a newly transplanted New Yorker, interested and amused me greatly. It occurred to me that others might also enjoy hearing about our community's past.

To gather more information for an informal West Windsor history, I asked Fran Ruch, Director of the Senior Center, if I could talk with the Seniors and see if any would be willing to let me interview them. The response was gratifying.

Fran Ruch mentioned my project to Mayor Douglas Forrester. Mayor Forrester liked the idea and formed the Historical Advisory Committee to survey historical resources of West Windsor and recommend how to preserve these resources.

Historical Advisory Committee (HAC)

The committee held its first meeting on March 10, 1982 with members: Kay Reed, Ruth Strohl, Jeanette Flickinger, and me. (Carol Silvester was unable to attend.) At our second meeting in April, Mary Schenck and Ruth Finkelstein joined the committee.

During the 15 months of its existence, the committee members decided upon and began several projects: a history of West Windsor, exhibits at local events, oral history tapes of long-time residents, tours of a historical nature and, most importantly, a survey of pre-World War I buildings and a way to preserve them.

In 1982, only one building in West Windsor was on the National Register of Historic Places: the 1761 John Rogers House in Mercer County Park. We felt the house might be an appropriate headquarters house for the Society and decided to contact the Parks Commission about leasing and restoring the building. Unfortunately, we were unable to come to a satisfactory arrangement with the Commission.



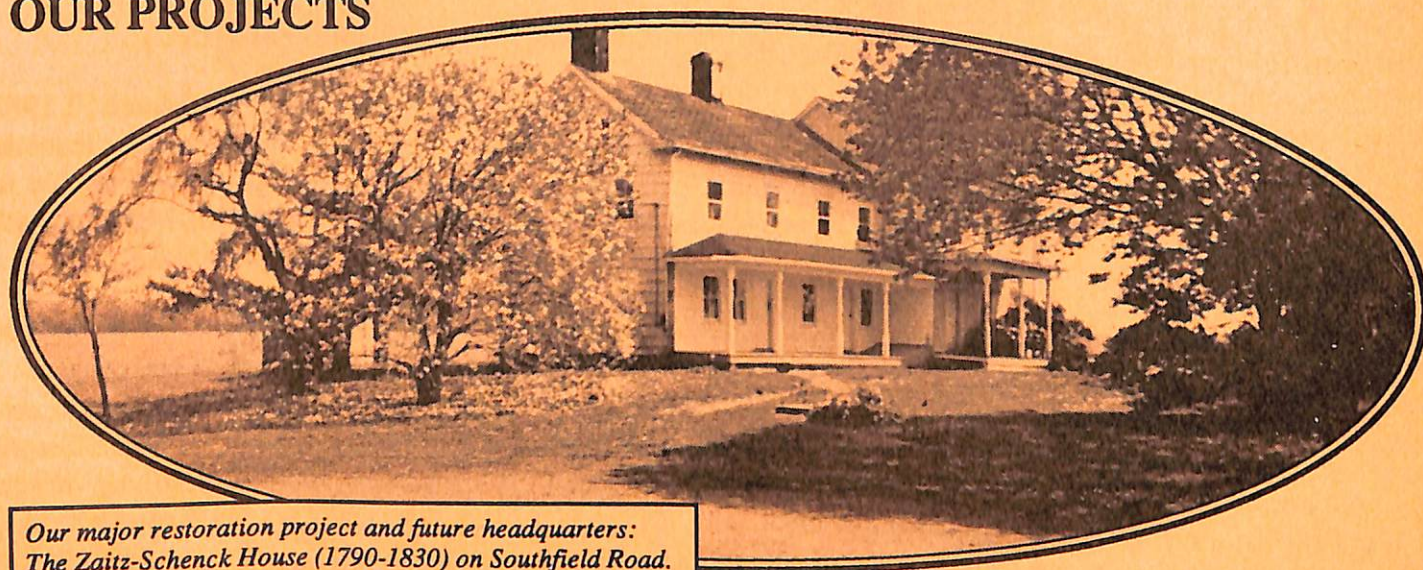
The HSofWW celebrates its 5th anniversary in May, 1988: (Front Row) A.H. Jantz, F. Conover, D. Mather, M. White, S. Bleacher. (Middle Row) J. Parry, C. Silvester, E. Simon. (Back Row) S. Steele, J. Sheets, K. Reed, W. Conover, E. Walton, M. Schenck, B. Midland.

The Historical Society of West Windsor (HSofWW)

By 1983, we realized that the five of us, with no budget, could do very little to accomplish our goals. Also, without a headquarters house, we had no rallying point. Carol Silvester suggested a newsletter as a focal point and Broadside was born.

The first issue in April 1983 announced the Society's projects and goals, and invited readers to become Charter Members. We also held a public meeting at the Castle on June 16, 1983. Our aim was 100 Charter Members. Ten years later, almost half of our Charter Members are still members in good standing, along with another 50 families and senior citizens.

OUR PROJECTS



*Our major restoration project and future headquarters:
The Zaitz-Schenck House (1790-1830) on Southfield Road.*

Zaitz-Schenck House

In May 1992, the Max Zaitz Family donated the 1790-1830 farmhouse on Southfield Road for us to restore and use as our headquarters. All our efforts for the immediate future will be aimed at this project. Under the leadership of Mary and Warren Schenck, Kay and Clifford Reed and Construction Supervisor Malcolm Roszel, we have restored the front porch, the chimneys and redone the roof, as well as upgraded the electrical service to the house.

When completed, the house and its surrounding out-buildings will provide the Township with a view of life on a West Windsor farm. We plan to decorate the kitchen in 1790s style and the double parlor in early Victorian. Other rooms may also become museum rooms in the future.

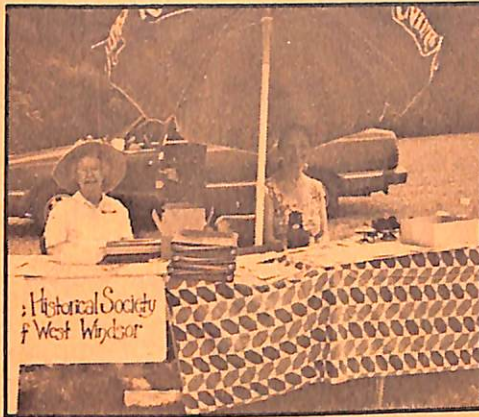
Two areas will become resources for the community: a library of West Windsor history and genealogy and a permanent exhibit of West Windsor history.

Broadside

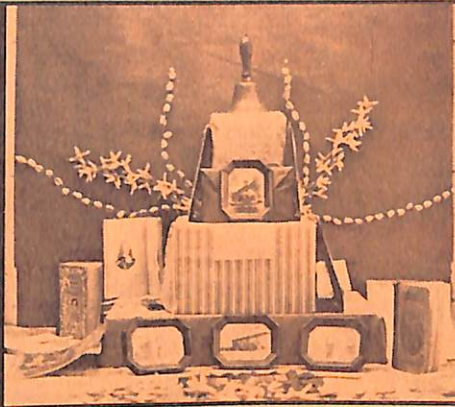
Including this issue, we have produced 16 issues of Broadside. The format and the first nine issues were designed and produced by Ruth Strohl Palmer.

Our goals for the newsletter include publicizing the history of the Township and the Society's views on preservation of the historic buildings left in West Windsor. We plan an issue featuring each of the major villages. We have produced issues on Dutch Neck, Penns Neck, the Aqueduct area, Port Mercer, Berrien City and Glenview so far. These articles will be expanded into a history book or books in the future.

Newsletters on West Windsor service organizations have included Twin "W" and the Lions Club. Articles of a broader scope have been produced from source material donated to us and interviews with long-time residents. Where possible photographs and documents are reproduced in each newsletter.



Frances Conover and Joan Parry tend the HSofWW exhibit at the West Windsor Township picnic on July 4, 1990.



Our first exhibit on Old West Windsor appeared at Maurice Hawk School.



Anneliese Midland, Carol Silvester, and Joan Parry answer questions at the HSofWW Exhibit, 1986 West Windsor Township picnic.

Exhibits

Each year we exhibit at Senior Citizen's Day, the Township Picnic, the Holiday House Tour and other local events. These exhibits also help to publicize West Windsor history. As stated earlier, our ultimate goal is to have a permanent exhibit of West Windsor history in our headquarters house.

We have produced exhibits on various topics, time periods and areas of West Windsor such as: the Delaware & Raritan Canal (for its 150th anniversary); School Days; The 1940s and World War II; Clothing from the Past; People and Places in Rural West Windsor.

Fund-Raisers

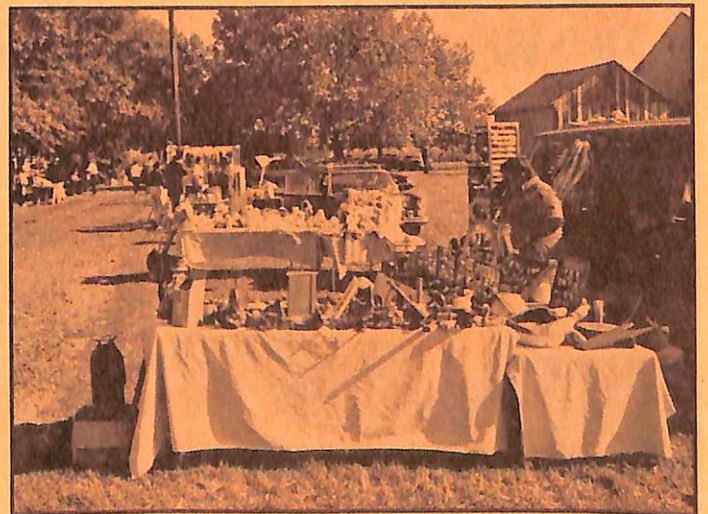
Each year we have held a house tour. In 1985 three historic houses in Dutch Neck were toured. In 1986, five historic houses in the Grover's Mill area opened to the public. With those two exceptions, we have held a Holiday House Tour each year at the Castle. Our tour in 1993 will take place on Sunday, December 12.

The donation of Stella Hawk Gordon's 1910 wedding dress inspired a Brides' Fashion Show in April, 1985. Thirty-eight bridal outfits dating from 1985 back to the 1860s, as well as six international bridal outfits, were modeled by West Windsor residents. The show was videotaped for future viewings.

Beginning in 1991, we added a yearly Flea Market, as well as an Auction to our calendar. In 1993, a combined Flea Market and Auction will take place on Saturday, September 18.



The models from our April, 1985 Brides Fashion Show relax at a reception. Kiki Parry (center) models the 1910 Stella Hawk Gordon dress that inspired the show.



Flea Market at the Zaitz-Schenck House, September 1991.

The Future

With the donation by Max Zaitz of 117 acres, the barn and outbuildings surrounding the farmhouse, our restoration project has broadened considerably. Options and ideas are easily come by. However, without funds, our hands are tied. We look to the community, members of the Society, and West Windsor business to consider coming to our aid. We urge you to join us in working to achieve our goals for the benefit of all of West Windsor.



Max Zaitz, donor of the Zaitz-Schenck House, poses with the Co-Chairpersons of the Restoration Committee: (Left to right) Kay and Clifford Reed; Mary and Warren Schenck.

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