Funding for Restoration Projects

The Monmouth County Historical Commission earlier this year awarded matching grants to eleven organizations, including the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society, to fund restoration of exterior transoms and doors. In addition, AHHS was awarded a Special Projects grant to fund insurance and utilities costs for the Strauss Mansion.

Jean Howson has conducted historical and archaeological research in the Caribbean, New York City, Newark, Jersey City and Highlands, NJ. Her expertise in this area has resulted in several successful grant applications for AHHS.

The restoration of the first floor porch is underway, thanks to a matching grant from the Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Fund. The focus of the Porch Supper Pot Luck on August 21st will be to celebrate the completed restoration.

Join us in welcoming Linda Barth as she discusses her popular book celebrating the wonderful and odd inventions developed in our state. Wednesday, July 17th at 7:30 pm. Free and open to all.
MUSIC AT THE MANSION

The last Thursday of every month at 7:15 pm, the historic Strauss Mansion parlor becomes a cozy, candlelit, intimate cabaret setting for a live musical performance. Hosted by Audra Mariel who has been acclaimed for her unique sound and sincere interpretation of timeless standards, Audra can often be coaxed to join the musicians for a number or two.

Relax, share food and beverages, enjoy the music and mingle with the performers during intermission. Admission is $15 plus food/beverage to share.

July 25 - We Used To Cut The Grass - an enigmatic experimental ensemble performing original and adapted contemporary/classical music.

The group, led by Cody McCorry, often features a large horn section and two drum sets, but no two performances are ever alike with different instrumentation and new sonic intentions.

Musical influences include Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Sun Ra, John Cage, Charles Mingus, Roland Kirk, Steve Reich, Thelonious Monk.


A. J. Meerwald Returns to Atlantic Highlands

New Jersey’s official tall ship returned to the Atlantic Highlands Marina June 12th and will be offering several sailings per week through July 4th.

Captained by Johann Steinke, the Schooner A. J. Meerwald was designated New Jersey’s Official Tall Ship by Governor Christine Todd Whitman in 1998. The Meerwald is a restored oyster dredging schooner whose home port is in Bivalve, Commercial Township, New Jersey. Launched in 1928, she was one of hundreds of schooners built along South Jersey’s Bayshore before the decline of the shipbuilding industry during the Great Depression.

Today, the A. J. Meerwald is used by the Bayshore Center at Bivalve for onboard education programs in the Delaware Bay near Bivalve, and at other ports in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the Delaware region. The Meerwald was added to the National Register of Historic Places on November 7, 1995.

In addition to captaining this historic vessel, Captain Steinke has written a delightful children’s book entitled The Greatest Captain in the World and as well as a sequel.

AHHS Hosts Meet-and-Greet With Crew of A. J. Meerwald

On June 12th AHHS hosted a public meet-and-greet event with the crew of the A. J. Meerwald. The pleasant late spring evening provided the perfect atmospheres as attendees feasted on sweet and savory selections, including delicious paninis generously supplied by Chiafullo’s Restaurant of Navesink, and socialized on the newly-restored porch. Kellan Brennan once again provided delightful music during the two-hour gathering.

The crew excitedly explored the many rooms and exhibits and marveled at the view from the Tower Room. Captain Johann led the crew in several sea shanties ranging from romantic to downright hilarious (with improvised lines that reduced the crew to laughter). The crowd enthusiastically joined in on the refrains.
Back in 1893…

…the Strauss family would have been reading about these events:

July 6 - Prince George, Duke of York, and Princess Mary of Teck, were married in the Chapel Royal, St. James Place, London.

July 6 - The small town of Pomeroy, Iowa is nearly destroyed by a tornado, killing 71 and injuring 200.

July 10-20 - The 17th Wimbledon Championships took place on the outdoor grass courts at the All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon, London.

July 30 - Following changes to the Bulgarian constitution early in the year, parliamentary elections were marred by riots in Peshtera. Attempts were made to steal the ballot boxes and assault the presiding officer.

August 15 - The New York hurricane, also known as the Midnight Storm, struck the New York City area with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph and a minimum barometric pressure of 952 mbar. Storm tides as high as 30 feet largely washed away Hog Island near Long Island.

August 20 - General elections were held in France.

August 27 - The Sea Islands Hurricane hits Savannah, Charleston and the Sea Islands, killing more than a thousand residents.

August 30 - Open Golf Championship held at Prestwick Golf Club in Prestwick, South Ayshire, Scotland.

How You Can Help

There are three ways you can help the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society in its mission.

1. With an annual membership
2. With a financial donation
3. By volunteering

For additional information please go to our website www.AH-history.org.

Rules of the Game

Before rules were officially codified in 1857 by the game’s first organizing body, The National Association of Base Ball Players, there was no tradition of playing nine innings in a game. Instead, teams played until a predetermined number of runs — called “counts” or “aces” — were scored by the winning team. Teams usually played to 21.

Most players were bare handed until the mid-1880’s; however, a few catchers began wearing a glove or gloves in the mid 1870’s.

Baseballs were relatively expensive to obtain and baseball clubs guarded their balls carefully. It was commonplace for a single ball to be used for an entire game. If the ball was hit into the long grass or the bushes, play was suspended until the ball was recovered, with players from both teams fanning out to find the precious baseball.

Umpires were usually prominent members of the community and sat somewhere in rough vicinity of the game, often under an umbrella. From a 1916 newspaper report: “The old time umpires were accorded the utmost courtesy by the players. They were given easy chairs, placed near the home plate, provided with fans on hot days and their absolute comfort was uppermost in the minds of the players. The umpire always received the choicest bits of food and the largest glass of beer.”

Early batsmen were allowed to request that the pitch be thrown high or low, and the pitcher was required by the rules to deliver the pitch requested.

In the very earliest days, the game was literally played backwards. Bases were commonly run clockwise with the batter running toward what is now third base after the ball was put into play. In some variations, the batsman could choose to run clockwise or counterclockwise, and subsequent hitters in the inning would be obliged to follow suit.

Vintage Base Ball Game

by Greg Caggiano

On August 11, 2018, the Monmouth Furnace Base Ball Club faced off against the Elizabeth Resolutes in a vintage base ball game played with 1860’s rules. This included underhand pitches, a softer, brown-leather baseball, and no gloves worn by the infielders! Monmouth Furnace served as the home team as they defeated the Resolutes by a score of 10-6. The game had been close early on, tied 4-4 after five innings. Several big hits garnered compliments from members of both teams, as the game was much more gentlemanly in the early days. The umpire wore a long coat, top hat, and held a cane while standing to the side of the catcher rather than behind (another idiosyncrasy of the time).

Despite a threat of rain earlier in the morning, a large crowd turned out for the event. Atlantic Highlands town councilman Jon Crowley emceed the event and assisted the audience by explaining many of the different rules from the time. Mayor Randi Le Grice threw out the first pitch.

This year, the Monmouth Furnace will be back at Fireman’s Field to host the Hoboken 9 on Aug 17th. Admission is free and open to all.

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The oyster industry flourished—producing more than 1,000,000 bushels a year making it the third largest producer in the country—until the 1950s when a parasitic protozoan killed off most of the shellfish beds. Rutgers University has been involved in a pilot oyster bed restoration program.

The presentation began with Changing Tides, a short documentary about the oyster industry in South Jersey during the early 20th century. Oyster wagons were on major city street corners for quick lunches just as today’s street wagons feature hot dogs, gyros or tacos. Shellfish was a major local industry and was so profitable that oysters were called white gold, making neighboring Port Norris the wealthiest municipality per capita in the state and among the top ones in the country.

In conjunction with the visit of the A. J. Meerwald, the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society hosted a lecture series by Executive Director Brian Keenan, Museum Curator Rachael Rodgers Dolhanczyk, and Program and Grants Manager Chase Jackson, Bayshore Center at Bivalve, at the Atlantic Highlands Senior Center on June 19th. Approximately forty people were in attendance, including Atlantic Highlands Mayor Rhonda Le Grice.

The second presentation, in conjunction with Juneteenths Celebration, was Black Footprints on White Sand, about beaches designated for the black population during the 1800s and 1900s. Interestingly, Atlantic City beaches and hotels were designated for the black population during the 1800s and 1900s. Interestingly, Atlantic City beaches and hotels were not segregated until 1900.

Chicken Bone Beach was a family-oriented beach serving the needs of black working class Atlantic City. The nickname derived affectionately from the tradition of vacationing families who flocked to the shore bringing beach balls, umbrellas and blankets for oceanside fun and picnic baskets with fried chicken for seaside dining. When they finished eating, they buried the chicken bones in the sand.

The four o’clock tea ritual became known as “low tea” because it was served in the low point of the afternoon.

Tea fare included many items such as elaborate bite-sized sandwiches recently made popular by the Earl of Sandwich, as well as a plethora of sweets and pastries, were incorporated into these afternoon events.

Certain foods became popular during each season of the year. Fruit and berries were eaten in the spring and summer, while heavier starchy items were reserved for the cooler months. Trays of different items were placed all about the area where tea was served. This allowed guests to mingle throughout the early evening.

A tea service was called a tête-à-tête, consisting of a teapot, sugar bowl and a cream pitcher. Many contraptions were invented for the single purpose of each consumption, such as a sterling silver berry scoop and a bun warmer.

Boiling water was often brought around by servants at regular intervals to replace the cooling water in the teapots.

High tea was a more formal and elaborate form of “five-o’clock tea”, or an “at home” (short visits of 15-30 minutes during the hours 3:00-6:00 pm; if the woman was busy or not in the mood for visiting, it was acceptable to be “not at home” which simply meant she was not receiving visitors and not insulting to the caller).

High tea did not call for the elaborate effects of an afternoon reception and was usually served to a larger number of guests than a luncheon, yet a smaller number than a reception. The guests at a high tea were usually served cold meats, vegetables and pastry, in substitution of dinner, and at small tables—and usually at about five o’clock.

In 1893, the London Daily Telegraph explained, “A well-understood high tea should have cold roast beef at the top of the table, a cold Yorkshire pie at the bottom: a mighty ham in the middle. The side dishes will comprise soused mackerel, pickled salmon (in due season), sausages and potatoes, etc., etc. Rivers of tea, coffee, and ale, with dry and buttered toast, salty lunns (wheat flour buns), scones, muffins, and crumpets, jams and marmalade.”

Porch Supper Pot Luck

The annual Porch Supper Pot Luck will take place on the newly restored first floor wrap-around porch of the Strauss Mansion on Wednesday, August 21st, at 6:30 pm. During this free event, the public is invited to share their favorite food and beverage while relaxing on the spacious porch and enjoying a delightful summer evening, just as the Strauss family would have done more than a century ago. Audra Mariel and Tom Monda will provide delightful musical accompaniment.

While dining during this era was a more formal, multi-course sit-down event in the sumptuous dining room, the Strauss’ would have frequently entertained their friends on the porch—most likely for afternoon tea—to enjoy the cooling ocean breezes wafting up to their hilltop summer cottage. Mimicking English Victorian society, afternoon tea was a pastime of the well-to-do. It fulfilled the purposes of socializing, event planning, introductions and informal business meetings, as well as a perfect platform for gossip which was a major pastime of the day.

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Board Matters

The Society was the recipient of the fund raising PBA Ball and Chance auction this year which was a resounding success with more than 300 people attending.

There are four outstanding grants in progress to aid in Mansion restoration projects. A capital grant from the NJ Historic Trust has completed the lower porch project. Next on the agenda is leveling and grading the area by the walkway into the kitchen, replacing the walkway and kitchen door, and restoring the upper porch.

Other projects discussed were a future kitchen redesign with help from the Monmouth Ocean Development Council, and new exhibits of the construction of the Strauss Mansion and the Mantell house.

The digitization project of the old newspapers is now up and running.

Also discussed were various ways to promote AHHS as press publicity is needed and difficult to obtain. Fundraising is a priority item and ways to expand our reach is needed.

The Board extended its deepest gratitude to Lynn Fylak and Jean Howson who have served as President and Vice President respectively, for many years of hard work, dedication, and passion during their involvement with the Strauss Mansion Museum.

Back on the Board: Greg Caggiano, Joanne Dellosso, Roy Dellosso, and Lou Fligor.

New Board member, after volunteering for several years, is Patty Bickauskas.

Executive Board announcements: Ken Frantz will serve as acting President and Joanne Dellosso will serve as acting Vice President until the November elections.

2019 Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Pow Wow

The 40th Annual Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Pow Wow took place this year in Pilesgrove, NJ, on June 8th-9th. The Pow Wow celebrated the culture and socializing of American Indians. It was a living event, not a reenactment.

Upstairs at the Strauss Mansion

The first two floors of the Strauss Mansion replicate the lifestyle of the Strauss family in the late 19th-early 20th century. A third floor room is devoted to the artifacts, maps and place names associated with the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation.

The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation is the northernmost of three interrelated tribes of the Delaware Bay area, made up of families from southern New Jersey and the Delmarva Peninsula.

The Lenni-Lenape, or simply “Lenape”, (ləˈnəpi) are the ancient root of many American Indian nations. The Lenape homeland included all of New Jersey, northern Delaware, eastern Pennsylvania, and southeastern New York. The Nanticoke are the people of the Delmarva peninsula between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, the result of the coalescing of these two interrelated tribes, beginning as far back as the 1600s.

The Lenape kinship system had matrilineal clans, i.e., children belonged to their mother’s clan from which they gained social status and identity. The mother’s eldest brother was more significant as a mentor to the male children than was their father who was generally of another clan. Hereditary leadership passed through the maternal line, and women elders could remove leaders of whom they disapproved.

Throughout much of the 1800s and 1900s, tribal governance continued as a self-isolating, family-clan-style leadership operating in conjunction with tribal churches.

40th Annual Outdoor Flea Market

By Bette VanDeventer

The Atlantic Highlands Historical Society is gearing up for the 40th Annual Outdoor Flea Market at the Atlantic Highlands Marina on Saturday, September 14th, 10:00 am-4:00 pm. Rain date is Saturday, September 21st.

More than 100 vendors offer a dazzling variety of antiques, collectibles and crafts, as well as new and second-time-around items.

To participate this year and receive a vendor contract, call Bette at 732-291-4313 or Carmen at 732-291-9337. Space donation is $35 each.

Also contact them to volunteer for the day or to contribute to our Treasures d’Or table.

All proceeds from the event will be used for the ongoing restoration of the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society Strauss Mansion Museum, as well as educational programs throughout the year.
The Tower

While on the third floor, be sure to climb the stairs to the tower for a 270 degree view (watch your head at the top of the stairs). To the right is the Atlantic Ocean and on the left is the curving bayshore toward Keyport. On a clear day a striking view of the New York City skyline, just 15 miles away across the bay, can be seen.

It is believed that originally the tower was taller and its upper portion was open without glass windows. Cooler night air would come in through the lower floor open windows and door transoms, was drawn up by the chimney effect of the tower, and created air movement throughout the house.

The Strauss Mansion Museum is open to the public Saturday-Sunday, 12:00 - 4:00 pm, April-December. Free admission; self-guided tour.

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