

HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO ACQUIRE 1878 STEPHEN CRANE HOUSE

The Asbury Park Historical Society is working on a deal to take ownership of the Stephen Crane House and turn the 1878 house on Fourth Avenue into a museum. The society is trying to raise \$100,000 this year to help fund related acquisition and repair costs.

The current owner of the house, Frank D'Alessandro, has offered to sell the house to the Historical Society for \$1 if he can continue to live in the converted barn behind the house. D'Alessandro purchased the property in 2001.

"The society needs a home," D'Alessandro told the society membership at their annual meeting at the Asbury Park Library in January.

D'Alessandro bought the property from Tom and Regina Hayes in 2001 when the couple moved from Asbury Park. They paid \$7,500 for it in 1995 and made some major improvements to the building, including a new roof paid for with a donation from Bruce Springsteen. They sold it with the stipulation that it be maintained as a museum. It has been used for special programs and performances for 10 years.

The Stephen Crane House at 508 Fourth Ave. is one of the oldest houses in Asbury Park - if not the oldest - and was built in 1878. Author Stephen Crane lived in the house for nine years, about one-third of his life. He died in 1900 at age 29. Crane's best known work is "The Red Badge of Courage" and his archives are kept at Syracuse University.



This is the biggest challenge ever for the Historical Society," according to President Don Stine, who said its two previous challenges have been a monument for the Morro Castle shipwreck off Asbury Park and the refurbishing of the Rainbow Room sign from the former Albion Hotel which now hangs in the Transportation Center.

A number of issues need to be resolved, however, for the society to move forward and acquire the Crane House. A variance to turn it into a museum has already been granted by the city and it's been suggested the property could be divided into two separate lots for the house and the rear carriage house and then turned into condominiums.

The society will apply for a property tax exemption from the city. If the city says no, the society can appeal to the county for help.

Applications are also pending to have the Crane House placed on the state and national Registries of Historic Places. If either the state or the federal government grants the application, approval by the other would be automatic.

The Historical Society is trying to raise \$100,000 this year to fund closing costs, insurance, escrow funds, and repairs. To donate go the www.APHistoricalSociety or mail check to APHS, P.O. Box 543, Asbury Park, NJ 07712.

New Jersey SHPO Officials to Visit Asbury Park

State historic preservation officials visited Asbury Park on Thursday, March 14, to discuss various historic preservation issues, from the theft of about six tons of antique copper panels from Convention Hall to preserving the historic Stephen Crane House.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Administrator Dan Saunders and state Senator Jennifer Beck attended the meeting.

The meeting was held at the Stephen Crane House, 508 Fourth Avenue and was preceded by a visit to the old National Guard Armory building at Lake Avenue and Bond Street and a look at the damage done to Convention Hall (which is listed on both the state and federal Register of Historic Places) from the theft of the copper panels.

Madison Marquette reported to the police that the panels were stolen on Aug. 2, 2011 but did not announce publically they had been stolen until March 2012. Their scrap value is estimated at as much as \$60,000.

Police have investigated the theft twice but come up with no viable leads.

Veterans from VFW Post 1333 in Asbury Park, which occupies the historic armory building at Lake Avenue and Bond Street, are also expected to attend the meeting to get more information about preserving their building.

Registering the Stephen Crane House on the State and National Registers of Historic Sites will also be discussed.

2013 Annual Membership Meeting-BIG Plans for the Future!

The 2013 Annual Membership Meeting of the Asbury Park historical Society was held on Wednesday, January 17, 2013 at the Asbury Park Public Library. The annual report and proposed projects and events for 2013 were presented by President Don Stine.

The main event of the evening was Frank D'Alessandro's presentation on his generous proposed donation of the Stephen Crane House to the APHS to be used as a city museum, arts venue and historical society headquarters. The topic was enthusiastically discussed by the trustees and present members.

Also speaking on the topic of building a successful and self-sustaining local historical society were guest speakers Gail Shaffer, President of the Ocean Grove Historical Society and Howard "Doc" Richmond, a founding member of the Ocean Township Historical Society. There were many unique stories and much valuable information shared by these experienced local historians which were appreciated by the trustees and the membership.

The society's bylaws were approved by the membership and the following trustees were elected: Teddy Chomko, John Moor, David Sobotka and Donna Troppoli.



Henry Vaccaro (right) with Paul Kapalko at the AP Historical Society's booth in the Antiques Emporium.

City Contractor Friend of Nashville Legend

An Asbury Park contractor held a book signing about his close friendship with legendary country music star Johnny Cash in the Historical Society's booth downtown on Saturday evening, March 2.

The friendship between Vaccaro and Cash goes back at least 30 years and now the memories of those years are available in a published book for the first time.

"Johnny Cash Is A Friend of Mine," a self-published book, previously available only through Kindle on Amazon.com and on the Apple iPad, has now been issued in a 157-page soft cover book, loaded with great personal stories and photographs.

Vaccaro's book, which retails for \$39.99, is for sale in the Historical Society's booth in the Antique Emporium, 646 Cookman Avenue.

Vaccaro said response to his book has been "fabulous." "I couldn't be more pleased and everybody who's seen or read the book can't put it down. Any Johnny

Cash fan will enjoy the book because it tells the personal side of Johnny Cash, not the public side," he said.

"There are lots of stories about Johnny in Asbury Park. In all there are about 30 stories and about 10 of those relate to Asbury Park," he said.

Cash invested in Asbury Park's Berkeley-Carteret Hotel, along with Vaccaro, in the mid-'80s and kept a suite of rooms there until 1992. His CD, "The Great Lost Performance," documents the July 28, 1990 concert he gave at the Paramount Theatre.

Vaccaro first met Cash casually in 1973 at a reception at Garden State Arts Center. "We developed a very good friendship over the years. We went fishing in the Bahamas, traveled together a lot for 30 years, and I was an honorary pallbearer at his funeral," Vaccaro said. Cash died on Sept. 12, 2003.

"Everyone has always been urging me to put my stories into a book form," Vaccaro said.