

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASBURY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**JOIN UP OR
RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP!**
See Page 6 for Details!

*Where the Past
Meets the Future*

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Batter Up! For Fun Under the Spring Sun



Captain Russ McIver (holding bat) of the Monmouth Furnace Vintage Base Ball Club will be our guest speaker, at an April 15 fun(d)-raiser saluting Stephen Crane's connection to the 19th century game.

Help the AP Little League play ball... and celebrate a famous fan!

Frequent visitors to our historic home at the **Stephen Crane House** know that we're pleased to collect donations regularly for the **Asbury Park Little League**, the wonderful local organization directed by **Danny McKee**. What they might not have known was that young Mr. Crane was quite the baseball buff (and an impressive college-level player) back in the day — so to call attention to that fact, the Crane House invites the public to help us “throw out the first pitch” for the Little League kids, during a free screening event on Saturday, April 15.

Beginning at 3 pm, we'll be hosting an afternoon that's highlighted by a showing of the classic MGM musical **Take Me Out to the Ball Game** (see page 6), with introductions from McKee and another special guest: **Russ McIver**, captain of the Allaire State Park-based **Monmouth Furnace Vintage Base Ball Club**. The Allenhurst resident will discuss the game as it was played in the 19th century, the renewed interest in vintage-rules ball, and the allure of the diamond to a certain aspiring author. *Cont. on Page 3*

Guides wanted, for spring and summer walking tours of Asbury Park!

Whether it's a sightseeing excursion to the fast-changing boardwalk and waterfront, an exploration of the many landmarks with a connection to the city's musical history, or a tour of our beautiful historic churches, trustees of the Asbury Park Historical Society are frequently asked to act as guides for groups of visitors from all over the region (and around the world). Beginning here in spring 2017, the APHS will inaugurate its first-ever program of official guided walking tours — and we're putting the call out to prospective tour docents with a passion for Asbury Park, a way with words, and a desire to put our city's best face forward! *Cont. on Page 6*

It's Open House at our house, on A Weekend in Old Monmouth!

This May, for the first time ever, the Historical Society's Stephen Crane House headquarters will be an official site for **A Weekend in Old Monmouth**, the annual slate of self-guided historic home tours coordinated by the **Monmouth County Historical Commission**. As the only tour stop within the city of Asbury Park, the 1878 cottage will be part of a “Green Tour” route that also includes sites in Ocean Grove, Spring Lake, Sea Girt and Howell.

Our doors will be open to visitors 10 am to 5 pm on Saturday, May 6 and noon to 5 pm on Sunday, May 7. Members and trustees of the APHS will be on premises to answer questions and furnish informative materials regarding the colorful history (and Crane family connection) of the former Arbutus Cottage, a State and National Historic Site. A complete list of Old Monmouth tour sites can be found on the Historical Commission's page at co.monmouth.nj.us.

Visit Our Website at www.aphistoricalociety.org

Winter was no 'Off Season' for the APHS!



During January's annual Reorganization Meeting at the **Public Library**, the Historical Society welcomed a special guest of honor: **Milton Edelman**, the veteran photographer whose postcard images, people portraits, news pictures and commercial work captured life in and around Asbury Park for generations. Now 94 years young, the Bradley Beach resident was paid tribute through a display of photos curated by APHS trustee **Kay Harris** (whose **Asbury Galleria** business represents Milton's most classic images), and a retrospective slideshow narrated by *Legendary Locals* author **Tom Chesek**.



Returning to the Crane House for another Winter/Spring schedule of "**Lights! Camera! Politics!**" film screenings, Asbury Park's Mayor Emeritus (and classic movie fan) **Ed Johnson** presented a slate of dramas under the theme "The City Never Sleeps: Politics, Influence and Corruption." Among the offerings was a March 4 showing of the fact-based 1950s thriller *The Phenix City Story*, introduced by attorney, public defender and former Assistant County Prosecutor **Ron Troppoli** (left).



APHS members **Pam and Charlie Horner** (fourth and fifth from left in above photo) joined a roster of the finest a cappella vocal groups in the region, during the finale of a March 4 *Doo Wop Explosion II* concert at Monmouth University's **Pollak Theatre**. A sequel to last year's successful Doo Wop Explosion on the MU campus (where the Horners also curated an acclaimed exhibit honoring the vintage sounds of Asbury Park's Springwood Avenue), the event was co-produced under the couple's **Classic Urban Harmony** banner. Watch for updates on an ambitious book project from Charlie, Pam and **Madonna Carter Jackson**, on the Shore's legendary jazz, gospel and R&B music makers!



On March 30, APHS president **Don Stine** conducted a tour of Asbury Park's music-related landmarks for a group of students from **Gaynor McOwn**, a Staten Island-based Outward Bound School. The teens from Mr. Beitchman's "Rock of Ages" class enjoyed an excursion through the decades that took them from such iconic sites as the **Paramount Theatre** and **The Stone Pony**, to exciting new attractions like **House of Independents** and the newly expanded **Lake House** complex.

Baseball had a grip on young Stephen Crane

"I am rather more proud of my baseball ability than of some other things."

So said **Stephen Crane** in 1896, after he had achieved a degree of fame with *The Red Badge of Courage*; an interlude during which other writers were calling upon him for biographical details.

A lifelong fan, Crane would spend his earliest summers here in Asbury Park playing pick-up games with other local boys. He played the position of catcher for **Asbury Park High School** when he was 14 and 15 (right around the time that he was making his first efforts at writing short stories), and was known to forego wearing a glove, boasting that no one could pitch a ball that he could not catch bare-handed.

He also wrote to a friend with the declaration that he was going to be a professional ballplayer — and he was said to have won a student essay contest by dashing off his paper during his bench time between at-bats.

After graduating high school, Crane would go on to abbreviated stints at several boarding schools, including **Claverack College** in upstate New York. He said of his time there:

"I never learned anything there...but heaven was sunny blue and no rain fell on the diamond when I was playing baseball."

Crane would not graduate from Claverack, but would transfer to **Lafayette College** in Easton, PA, where he would half-heartedly pursue the study of mining engineering. In 1890 he would suit up once again as catcher for the intramural team — but despite his attempts, he would never make the varsity squad, having flunked most of his seven classes and shown little interest in attending lectures.

Still, when Stephen's mother Helen — whose uncle **Jesse T. Peck** had co-founded **Syracuse University** — attempted to get her bright but undisciplined student son into SU, he was considered a "prime prospect" for the school's baseball team, more than he was an academic standout. In his words:

"I did little work at school, but confined my abilities, such as they were, to the diamond...the truth of the matter is that I went there more to play base-ball than to study."

A photo reproduced here shows Crane front and center in a team photo for the **Syracuse Varsity Nine**, during his one semester there in 1891. He made a big impression as catcher and occasional shortstop for the Syracuse squad, and was actually named captain, an almost unheard-of thing for a freshman; at the time he was the youngest team captain in American col-

lege baseball.

At 5' 6" and about 125 pounds, he was small for a catcher, but was said to have compensated with his enthusiasm for the game, his encouragement to his teammates, and his "wantonly profane" language regarding the skills of the opposing teams. Even though sickly in appearance, a heavy smoker, and given to keeping late hours, he was a competitor who was known to disdain the heavier mitts that were coming into use at the time, preferring to use a lighter padded glove — or even no glove at all, as he would coat his hands with iodine and witch hazel to disinfect wounds and toughen the skin.

The *Syracusan* newspaper noted that Crane "plays a good game behind the bat, but he is weak in throwing to second" — and in the team's season opening win, Stephen allowed three passed balls and showed signs of those long throwing difficulties. But he also provided early evidence of the take-charge strategist who would teach the pitcher how to pick off a runner, and use a system of hand signals to call the pitch.

He regularly caught the school's pitcher **Mansfield French**, a big guy with a powerful fastball, and it's been said that "every ball seemed to lift him off his feet and propel him bodily backwards." French himself would recall:

"When we succeeded in striking out our man, an expression of diabolical glee would light up his face."

Articles in the *Syracuse Daily Orange* and the *New York Times* relate that on June 6, 1891, the team traveled to play at Colgate University for the Upstate NY Pennant. On that particular day, Crane was forced to play first base (and the team manager had to fill in at center field) when two teammates didn't bother to show up for the game. Syracuse lost the game, and their shot at the pennant, by a humiliating score of 13-0 — and the case was made that the themes found in *Red Badge* (of the man who deserts his unit, and his comrades who are forced to soldier on without him) might have been inspired by this unhappy day on the playing field; a bitter experience that may have prompted Crane to quit school just a few days later.

Today, the university that "advised him not to return unless he underwent a change in intention" houses his personal papers and archives — including a ball autographed by the man who told his friend, the author **Hamlin Garland**, that baseball was like the battlefield that he wrote about so convincingly, in that *"The psychology is the same...the opposing team is the enemy tribe."*

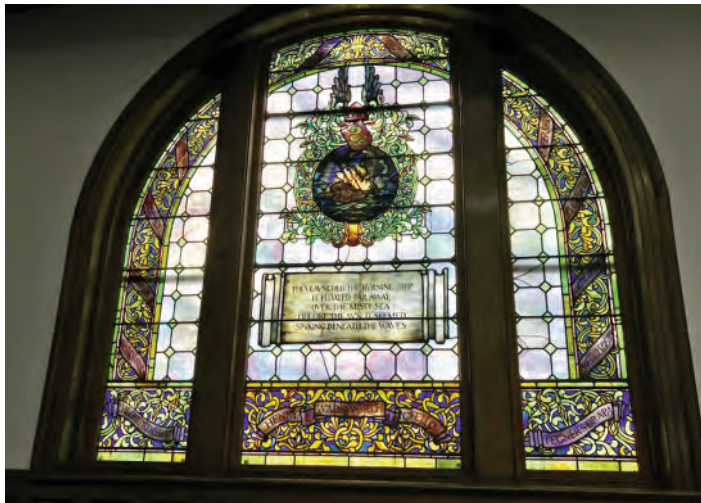
A longer version of this story appears on our website.



A window into history, at the city's library

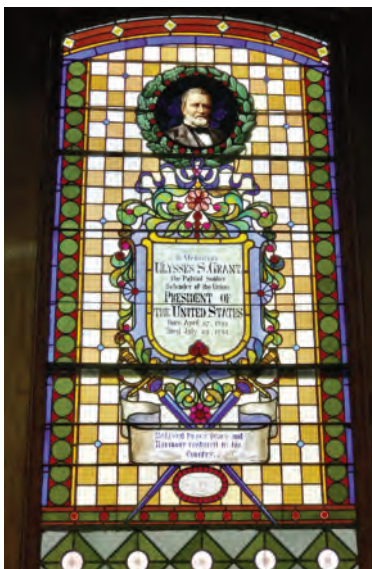
Research/ Photos by Susan Rosenberg, Newsletter Editor

As much a part of Asbury Park history as the people, events and buildings it chronicles, the city's **Public Library** has welcomed generations of visitors from its corner of First and Grand Avenues. Constructed beginning in 1885, the building was completed in 1901, some eight years after Asbury Park had been incorporated as a city.



Once distinguished by a Queen Anne-style high tower that adorned its northeast corner — but was removed in 1930 — the building remains home to a couple of the city's “best kept secret” treasures: its two huge stained glass windows.

Adorning the interior western wall is an original **Louis Comfort Tiffany** stained glass. The designer **Theodore Russell Davis** — an artist of national renown, best known for his on-site sketches of Civil War battles, who relocated to the Asbury Park beachfront in the last years of his life — chose for the theme “Tegner’s Drapa,” an old-Norse styled poem by then recently deceased **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**. The window depicts a burning ship, or sea burial, with the body of the dead Viking god, Balder. This stanza in the window reads:



*“They launched the burning ship
It floated far away
Over the misty sea
Till like the sun it seemed,
Sinking beneath the waves.”*

The setting sun beautifully illuminates the colors and breadth of the art work, which Davis is said to have dedicated to **Dr. Henry Mitchell**, designer of the city's then-noted sanitation system.

When former President **Ulysses S. Grant** died in

1885, his personal friend **George W. Childs** of Philadelphia donated the eastern window honoring Grant's legacy. The words beneath the portrait read *“In Memorium, Ulysses S. Grant, the Patriot Soldier, Defender of a Union, President of the United States, born April 27, 1822, Died July 23, 1885. He Lived to see Peace and Harmony restored to his Country.”*

Grant was the first president to maintain a beachfront cottage, or “Summer White House” at the Jersey Shore. While he lived in Long Branch, worshipped in Elberon, and spoke in Ocean Grove, it's this commemorative window in Asbury Park that endures (as well as his image on the \$50 bill).



An interesting assortment of statuary adorns the top of the old card catalog. Library director **Robert W. Stewart** and Principal Library Assistant **Kathleen Melgar** are pictured with a bust of 19th century women's rights activist and Women's Christian Temperance Union president **Frances E. Willard**. The “Uncrowned Queen of America” is said to have visited our local WCTU president **Mary Helen Peck Crane**, in her home at what is now the Crane House.



Asbury Park's **Sons of Italy, Mt. Carmel Lodge 1215**, proudly donated the bust of **Christofaro Colombo** that was once displayed at Convention Hall.

Themis, Greek goddess of Justice, is adorned with symbols of the sword and scales, representing common consent over coercion, and fair and equal administration of the law. No blindfold for this personification of Justice, because she is prophetic — and she is good for Asbury Park!

A personal journey, for APHS's Kay Harris

Members and fellow trustees of the Asbury Park Historical Society know **Kay Harris** as a great friend, colleague and tireless volunteer on behalf of preserving and promoting the cultural assets of our world-famous community. Many of our city's young people can call Mrs. Harris their teacher at **Asbury Park High School** — and people of all ages know her as the proprietor of a favorite boardwalk business: the **Asbury Galleria** shop in Convention Hall's Grand Arcade.

Here in the spring of 2017, the multi-tasking Kay can add a new credit to her life résumé: that of author, with the appearance of her self-published book ***From Amistad to the White House***. Subtitled "Teachable Moments from 1839 to Within My Lifetime," the non-fiction work is a chronicle of a personal journey — an intellectual/spiritual one, as well as an excursion through some pivotal points in our nation's physical space.

Evolving from an article she wrote for the travel magazine *Odyssey Couleur*, it was a journey that took her to many of the most significant sites in the history of the Civil Rights struggle — ranging from the cityscapes of Birmingham, AL and Memphis, TN, to the nearly forgotten backroads of little Money, MS. Retelling the often devastating events that transpired there, the author lends her perspective as an African American woman who came of age during that era — and brings us up to date with reflections on the election of America's first black President, and recent news stories that continue to define the ongoing struggle for human rights.



Herself the daughter of our city's first African American councilman (and granddaughter of the legendary artist, community activist and historian Lorenzo Harris Sr.), the author taught herself new computer design programs in preparing the book, which she launched with a reading and signing appearance during a March 17 Women's History Month event at the Stephen Crane House (pictured above).

From Amistad to the White House is available in hardcover and paperback at Asbury Galleria, or online from Amazon.com and other e-tailers. Follow the APHS on Facebook for updates on future reading/ signing appearances featuring Kay Harris.

County HC awards mini-grant to Crane House

On the evening of February 27, the members of the **Monmouth County Historical Commission** held their 28th annual **Preservation Grants Presentation** ceremony, at the Hall of Records building in Freehold, NJ. The occasion marks the official awarding of a series of "mini-grant" disbursements by the MCHC, and here in 2017, the **Asbury Park Historical Society** was one of 18 local historic preservation groups to receive one of the grants, each in the sum of \$550.

APHS Vice president **Jim Henry** and trustee **Dolly Sternesky** applied for the grant, which will be dedicated toward the much-needed repair and restoration of a lattice-work window and frame in the front entrance foyer of the Stephen Crane House.

Accepting the grant on behalf of her fellow trustees, Asbury Park Historical Society Secretary **Susan Rosenberg** invited the 12-member board to host its March 27 meeting at the Crane House, at which time several of the commissioners enjoyed their first close-up look at the ongoing refurbishment of the house at 508 Fourth Avenue.



APHS secretary Susan Rosenberg (center) is pictured with Monmouth County Historical Commissioner Ellen Terry, and county Board of Chosen Freeholders director Lillian G. Burry.

As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, the APHS lobbied the Historical Commission to include the Crane House on its annual **Weekend in Old Monmouth** tour itinerary — and on May 6-7, our historic headquarters will represent Asbury Park for the first time on this annual event.

Free public events at the Stephen Crane House

SAT. APRIL 15: Our salute to Stephen Crane's connection to the Great American Pastime gets underway at 3 pm, with a special presentation by captain Russ McIver of the Monmouth Furnace Base Ball Club, an appearance by Asbury Park Little League president Danny McKee, and a screening of the classic musical *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1949), starring Frank Sinatra, Gene Kelly and Esther Williams. Doors open at 2:30.

SAT. MAY 6 and SUN. MAY 7 : For the first time, the Stephen Crane House will be an official stop on the annual **Weekend in Old Monmouth** slate of self-guided tours, sponsored by the Monmouth County Historical Commission and hosted at dozens of historic homes and properties



throughout the county. Our doors will be open to visitors 10 am to 5 pm Saturday, and noon to 5 pm Sunday (while Open House hours will of course continue each and every Sunday from 12 to 2 pm), with complete route details and other information available at co.monmouth.nj.us.

Follow The Stephen Crane House on Facebook for updates on other events here in Spring 2017...including a **FILM SCREENING TBA** for a weekend date in mid-May...the return of Frank D'Alessandro's annual **OPERA ON FILM** series beginning in June...and a projected series of **MEET THE NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES** video/ podcast forums, hosted by Asbury Park Mayor Emeritus **Ed Johnson**.

Guides wanted, for walking tours of Asbury Park!

Continued from Pg 1

In a March 18 public meeting at the Crane House, APHS president **Don Stine** outlined a plan for three separate tours, to be offered regularly during the interval from Memorial Day through Labor Day. They include a then-and-now walk along the famous boardwalk and Ocean Avenue; a close-up look at the city's historic (and happening) downtown, and a joint Asbury Park/ Ocean Grove excursion coordinated with the Historical Society of OG. A diverse group of attendees that included local business owners, longtime residents, artists, students and historical re-enactors offered their ideas on the tours, for which admission will be charged to participants.

There's still time to sign up for this all-new program — and more than one way to become part of it. While tour docents must be physically able to do multiple sessions of the walking tour route, the Historical Society is also seeking history buffs who can help plot out the routes, compose informative notes, and assemble tour-guide materials that include vintage photographs/ memorabilia and illuminating “fun facts” that will enhance the experience for our visitors.

It's our hope that this program will see a successful maiden season, with an eye toward additional tour routes (and bike-based excursions) in seasons to come. Interested parties can contact Don Stine at the email address displayed below.

The Asbury Park Historical Society

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Join up or renew your membership today!

contact **Kay Harris**, Membership Chair, at kayharrismck@msn.com

Your generous donations of funds, historical materials and period furnishings are greatly appreciated for our community programs!

Donations via PayPal to antichay@gmail.com

Call the Crane House at 732-361-0189 or address correspondence to:

Asbury Park Historical Society c/o Stephen Crane House, 508 Fourth Ave., Asbury Park, NJ 07712

