

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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Here's to the new year...and the best of the past!

Mark your calendar! *Our annual reorganization meeting is Thursday, January 18*

It's the first and biggest forum of the year for the nonprofit, all-volunteer organization whose motto is "Where the Past Meets the Future" — and on the evening of January 18, the **Asbury Park Historical Society** invites all members of the community to our annual **Reorganization Meeting**. Hosted in the city's historic **Public Library** at First and Grand Avenues, the 7 p.m. program will cast our customary detailed look at an aspect of Asbury Park's richly storied past, with a **special presentation** on the Society's effort to preserve three of our city's historic monuments. There's also an eye on the future, with updates on the ongoing work at our historic Crane House headquarters — as well as a preview of APHS activities in the months ahead, plus new info on membership policy and a welcome message from the Board of Trustees. Complimentary refreshments will be served, so join your fellow APHS members for our first "night to remember" of the new year!



L-R: APHS trustees Andy Skokos, Susan Rosenberg, Frank D'Alessandro, Don Stine, and Jim Henry presided over the recent drawing for the winning entry in the annual 50/50 promotion.



The desk that President Wilson used in his Asbury Park summer headquarters remains on display at the Ocean Township Historical Society through June.

A "seat of government" for a U.S. President, in Asbury Park

He was a native son of Virginia when he was born in 1856 — but Thomas Woodrow Wilson can be said to be New Jersey's most significant contribution to the timeline of the nation's highest elected office. Before serving two terms as the 28th President of the United States (1913-1921), the man known as **Woodrow Wilson** served as governor of the Garden State (1910-1913), and prior to that as president of Princeton University (1902-1910).

While the Democrat was well known for his "Summer White House" residency at Shadow Lawn in West Long Branch, it was in downtown Asbury Park that Wilson set up his official White House offices during the summer of 1916 — an interval during which the chief executive balanced the demands of his re-election campaign with the efforts to advocate for peace during the lead-in to the First World War.

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Visit Our Website at www.aphistoricalociety.org

A “Fall Back” into a Season of Activity



On a dark and stormy October 27, the Stephen Crane House was the atmospheric setting for **Tales of Mystery, Murder and Madness**, an afternoon of readings from the works of such classic authors as Ambrose Bierce and Edgar Allan Poe. Crane House writer-in-residence **Tom Chesek** and host **Frank D'Alessandro** joined professional actors



Lindy Regan (seated) and **Bill Timoney** (not pictured) for a session that collected an epic haul of treats for local kids — and on Halloween, City Council members **Yvonne Clayton** and **Eileen Chapman** (above) got into costume and spirit, as they helped distribute the sweet swag during the city’s **Trunk or Treat** event at Municipal Plaza.



The Historical Society Archives Committee is on the case! President **Don Stine** was joined by (l-r) **Evelyn Murphy**, **Kate Doyle**, former Asbury Park Mayor **Patricia Candiano**, and **Kathleen Melgar** of the city’s Public Library, for a Sunday afternoon session on November 12 that made a good deal of headway toward cataloguing and organizing the Society’s trove of documents, photos, ephemera and other Asbury-related memorabilia. Our trustees are always welcoming the input and energy of member volunteers...so make it a point to attend one of our monthly public meetings, and speak to us about how we can work together to preserve and promote the architectural and cultural history of our city by the sea!



On November 19, as part of our annual birthday-month salute to Stephen Crane, actors **Charlie Deitz**, **Grace Modla**, and **Geoff Shields** — alias The Arbutus Theater of the Air Players — performed a hilarious adaptation of “**The Ghost**,” a stage frolic (by Crane and several of his famous author friends) that had not been seen in any form since 1899! The players reunited on our Lecture Room stage on December 17, for a “radium play” version of H.L. Mencken’s comical Yuletide tale “**A Bum’s Christmas**,” wrapping up an afternoon that featured Frank D’Alessandro’s “16th or 17th” annual **Season’s Readings** program. Together with the December 2 finale of Mayor Emeritus **Ed Johnson**’s fall film screening series, the events collected a generous round of donations to the 2017 **Asbury Park Toy Drive**.

A “Fall Back” into a Season of Activity



On December 3, following a one-year hiatus, the Asbury Park Historical Society teamed up once again with its sister organization from Ocean Grove, to host a **New York City Christmas Lights Tour** coordinated by APHS trustee **Teddy Chomko**. A full busload of 50 participants enjoyed a day-trip excursion to Rockefeller Center, Chelsea Market, and the Holiday Bazaar at Bryant Park, along with a guided tour of famous department store window displays, and a four-course lunch in Little Italy.



On December 15, the Society presented **Bill McKenna** of Neptune, winner of our annual 50/50 sweepstakes, with a check for \$855. Bill, who bought 5 chances in a pool of 130 entrants, generously donated a portion of his winnings to the APHS! Thanks to all who participated, including local businesses and ticket outlets **America’s Cup**, **Antique Emporium**, **Cookman Creamery**, **DJ’s Deli**, **Heaven**, **Le Parisien Cleaners**, **Paranormal Books**, **Show-Room Cinemas**, **Twisted Tree Cafe**, and **Words!**



The historic Stephen Crane House headquarters of the Asbury Park Historical Society continues to play host to numerous tour groups, in addition to serving as a meeting place for local civic organizations. Recently, onetime house tenant **Kerry Butch** welcomed her fellow board members of the **New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance** for their annual meeting, while October 2017 saw visits from the **Solomon Schechter School**, and a reunion of the **Asbury Park High School Class of 1962**. November 4 brought a tour group from the **Second Presbyterian Church of Carlisle, PA** (above left), for a slide show lecture on the life of Crane. Asbury Park resi-



dent **Pam Lamberton** hosted the first in a monthly first-Tuesday series of **Complete Streets** meetings on December 5 — and members of **The Dialogue Group** (above right) raised a toast to a peaceful and prosperous 2018, during a holiday get-together on December 18. A grass-roots community forum of neighbors from all walks of local life, the long-running Dialogue returned to 508 Fourth, scene for many of its earliest meetings. To learn how you can join in the discussion, contact **Linda Phillips** at lph@gmail.com — and contact the Crane House by phone or via Facebook, to inquire about arranging group tours or civic events at our community resource.

Free public events at the Stephen Crane House

SUN. JAN. 21: It's a look at parody in the movies, with a double feature of the hit 1980 comedy *Airplane!* and the 1957 drama that inspired it, *Zero Hour!* Showtime's at 3 pm, with doors opening 2:30.

SAT. FEB. 3: Asbury Park Mayor Emeritus **Ed Johnson** opens a new Winter-Spring series of "Lights! Camera! Politics!" events under the theme "Empowerment," with Sally Field starring as *Norma Rae* at 3 pm.

SUN. FEB. 18: Crane House host **Frank D'Alessandro** observes Black History Month with a special film presentation (TBA), screening at 3 pm.

SAT. MARCH 3: The "Lights! Camera! Politics!" continues with Beau Bridges in the 1970 film *The Landlord*, screening at 3 pm.

SUN. MARCH 18: Crane House host **Frank D'Alessandro** observes Women's History Month with a special film presentation (TBA), screening at 3 pm.

Check the Stephen Crane House Facebook page or follow The Coaster newspaper for updates on all free-admission events, here in our Lecture Room Theater!

Woodrow Wilson *Cont. from page 1*

A New York Times story from September 8, 1916 stated that "a suite of rooms has been engaged in a modern office building [Asbury Park Trust Co.; former post office]" — and that "office furniture has been sent from the White House."

A plaque on what would come to be called the **Post Building** at Mattison Avenue and Emory Street commemorates the fact that "Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States, used the entire fifth floor of this building for his executive offices during the late summer and early fall of 1916 ... It was in the offices here that many of President Wilson's plans for re-election were formulated, and it was here that his staff counted the returns which were to show that President Wilson had defeated his Republican opponent, Charles Evans Hughes, on November 7, 1916."

In the 2000s, when Wilson's desk was on exhibit at **Monmouth University**, students discovered in a drawer the official shipping orders that prompted the desk and other furniture to move from the White House to Asbury Park. This revelation confirmed that the desk was indeed that of the President.

Following the 1916 election, Wilson gifted the desk to his Princeton schoolmate **Elmer Geran**, who not only served under Wilson as a N.J. General Assemblyman (and later as U.S. Attorney for the District of N.J.), but also maintained a law practice in Asbury Park.

When Geran retired from law, he gifted the Wilson desk to his younger law partner, **Saul Lautman**. Lautman's daughter Ellen married **Donald Rapson**, who practiced law in New York and Asbury Park — and after Rapson died in the early 2000s, Ellen Rapson donated the desk to **Jim Foley**, historian for the Borough of Deal and president of the Board of Trustees for the **Long Branch Historical Museum**, otherwise known as the Church of the Presidents (Wilson was the last of the "Seven Presidents" who summered in and around Long Branch).

Wilson's desk is currently on display at the Township of Ocean Historical Museum's **Eden Woolley House**, 703 Deal Road, Ocean Township, as part of an exhibit called "**Bringing World War One Home**." You can explore the exhibit and see the desk now through June 2018, with museum hours and other information at oceanmuseum.org.
— written by Susan Rosenberg

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:

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