

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ASBURY PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Where the Past
Meets the Future*

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Getting Arty on the Boardwalk



Watercolorist Ray Sternesky returns for another edition of the annual Art on the Boardwalk event, going on from 10 am to 5 pm on August 21.

Annual Art Show and Sale set for Sunday, August 21

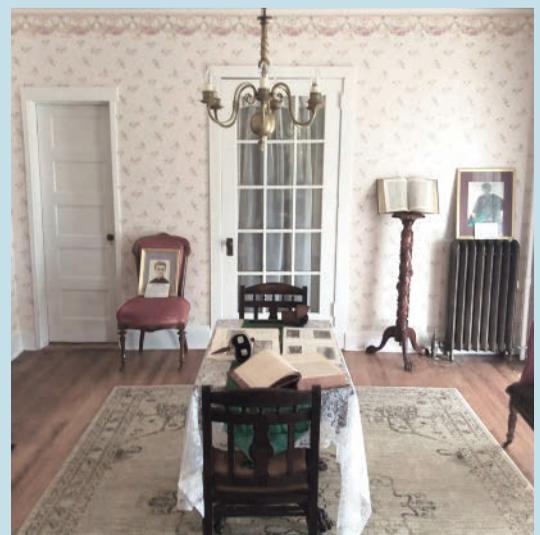
Returning for an 11th annual edition on Sunday, August 21, **Art on the Boardwalk** transforms the famous Asbury Park boards into an open-air art and unique crafts bazaar that extends southward from Convention Hall — and offers a close-up look at some of the area's most creative painters, sculptors, photographers and makers of wearable art.

According to event coordinator and Historical Society trustee **Teddy Chomko**, "This is something that people mark their calendars for...many of the artists truly love coming to Asbury each year, and always look forward to the next one we host." *Continued on Page 2*

The Stephen Crane House re-opens for tours, events

A busload of some 40 senior sightseers from the Princeton Arts Group had the honor of being our first welcomed guests on June 15, as the historic **Stephen Crane House** officially re-opened to the public following a nearly two-month hiatus.

Among other activities during a busy day in Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, the group was treated to a slideshow and lecture on Crane's life, presented by Historic Society trustee **Frank D'Alessandro**. They also got a first look at the beautifully restored centerpiece of our house tours: the first-floor parlor where Stephen's mother Mary Helen Peck Crane received guests (including famed suffragist and social activist Frances Willard) in the years between 1883-1891. *Cont. on Page 4*



A New Address...and a New Meeting Time!

With the move to our permanent home at the Stephen Crane House, the Historical Society would like to remind everyone that we've discontinued our P.O. Box address — and that all regular mail correspondence should now be sent to **508 Fourth Avenue, Asbury Park NJ 07712**.

A reminder also that our regularly scheduled meetings (third Thursday of each month) at the Crane House will have a **new earlier start time of 7:00 pm**, effective with the next public-welcome session on the evening of July 21. Join us there...we'd love to hear your ideas and input!

Visit Our Website at www.aphistoricalociety.org

An Affair to Remember for APHS



It was a time for looking back — and a time for looking ahead, here in the place "Where the Past Meets the Future." On the evening of Sunday, June 12, the Asbury Park Historical Society celebrated 15 years of preserving and promoting the architectural and cultural treasures of our city, with an anniversary party at **Tim McLoone's Supper Club** on the famous boardwalk.

A full house of members, past/ present trustees and special guests enjoyed dinner, hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, birthday cake, and a panoramic view of the oldest and newest landmarks on the fast-moving Asbury Park waterfront. Historical Society president **Don Stine** welcomed attendees in his opening remarks; **The Jazz Lobsters** entertained with a selection of signature standards from the Big Band era — and **Celia Morrissette** narrated a slideshow presentation that highlighted the work of our society's predecessor organizations, as well as the many community projects, public events and presentations that the APHS has been a part of, since our incorporation in 2001.

ART SHOW Continued from Page 1

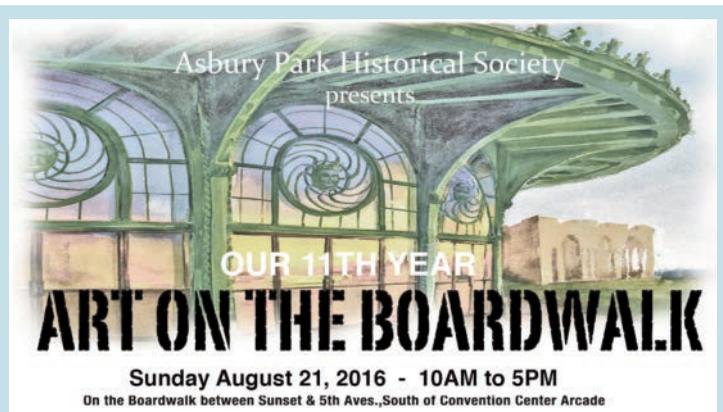
The summertime fundraiser was founded in 2006 by celebrated local painter **Ray Sternesky** and his wife, APHS trustee **Dolly Sternesky**. While Ray and Dolly continue to take part in the show each year, the number of participating creatives has more than tripled from the original 11 — with plenty of room to grow, as the artists set up under tents lined up along the length of the boardwalk.

"I try to keep the show changing, and invite different artists each year" says Chomko, citing the favorable reaction to "made in the USA" jewelry items recently introduced to the event. "With our move into the Crane House, we are looking to dedicate a portion of the profits to one of the future projects we have planned for the house."

Some 200 shopping bags with souvenir items and discounts from a variety of local vendors were designed (utilizing classic postcard images of Asbury Park) by Celia and APHS trustee **Eileen Chapman**, and distributed to guests. Celia and her husband **Keith Johnson** also printed another 300 bags for the Society to sell at its fundraising events. Society members shared personal memories of Asbury Park in a commemorative program — and **Mary Damato**, our treasurer and longest-serving board member, was honored by **Teddy Chomko** with a special gift on behalf of the trustees.

Chocolate Carousel of Wall Township provided the custom cake; **L.B. Forcellati Nursery** donated the floral arrangements, and **Tom Chesek** produced the program book and slideshow for the occasion. The event committee of **Eileen Chapman**, **Teddy Chomko**, **Joe Lemme**, **Celia Morrissette**, **Sonja O'Brien** and **Andy Skokos** worked tirelessly to make this evening a success, with the gracious assistance of **Frank D'Alessandro** and **Susan Rosenberg**, and the Society thanked New Jersey Natural Gas as well as other advertisers and sponsors who offered their generous donations and support.

While 15 years represents an uncommon milestone for celebration, the Asbury Park Historical Society views 2016 as a significant point on the timeline — both for a resurgent city that's writing an entirely new chapter in its roller coaster history, and for a not-for-profit, all-volunteer organization that's poised to play an even more active and engaged role in the community for the exciting years ahead.



You can find the hard-working Teddy and his volunteer helpers at the APHS welcome tent during the art show, going on between the hours of 10 am and 5 pm.

From Crane's House to Our House (part 2 in a series)

As detailed in a previous issue of our newsletter, the house at 508 Fourth Avenue in Asbury Park was not always recognized as the historically important site that we know today. It's due to the selfless actions of numerous dedicated people that the former Arbutus Cottage was saved from demolition and obscurity.

In 1995, Asbury Park residents **Tom and Regina Hayes** were looking to buy an investment property at a time when the town was economically and spiritually depressed. Hayes, the Director of Customer and Community Relations for New Jersey Natural Gas, had been clued in to the house's connection to the famed author-poet-journalist Stephen Crane (and to his prominent activist-writer mother Mary Helen Peck Crane) by a fellow member of the local Garden Club, Fourth Avenue resident **Doug Mauro**. Not wanting to see the house torn down or made into a multi-family dwelling, the Hayes family purchased it for \$7,500, becoming the 24th deed owners since the city's founder James Bradley sold off the original lot in the middle of the 1870s.

In keeping with the spirit of Stephen Crane and his other family members who wrote short stories, essays and works of journalism, Tom and Regina had a vision of establishing the building as a cultural resource; a venue for hosting community events, and a "meet the Cranes" museum.

Before the public could even be allowed into the circa 1878 structure, the antiquated, deteriorating house was subject to some much-needed restoration work. The house's last full time occupant — daughter of the couple who operated the cottage as **The Hotel Florence** in the post-World War II era — had never legally held title to the property and was

removed from the premises, whereupon the house was boarded up. By the middle of the 1990s, squatters had made themselves at home in the attic; there were holes in the roof, and overflowing trash cans collected rain water in the middle of seriously buckling floors.

Tom and Regina assembled a team of volunteers that included their three children, co-workers from the gas company, a local Boy Scout troop, next door neighbor (and future Crane House owner) Frank D'Alessandro, and **Kerry Butch**, who as the house's first upstairs rental tenant would do much of the restorative work on the second floor. Prominent among the "Crane Crew" was City Historian **Werner Baumgartner**, a restorer of old houses and an electrical engineer who was instrumental in bringing the old property's wiring and plumbing back up to code. It was a task that often required Baumgartner to hunker into cellar crawlspaces that were not much larger than an average-sized adult human being — causing Tom Hayes, who had to pull him out of some tight spots, to exclaim "What remarkable trust...thank God for Werner."

While the house was ready to receive visitors by the next year, the city's Zoning Board would at first refuse to allow public events in a residential zone. It took the efforts of **Jim Nappi** — an attorney, and future first president of our present-day Asbury Park Historical Society — to obtain both a museum variance and tax-exempt 501(C)(3) status for 508 Fourth Avenue; a development that allowed the newly re-christened **Stephen Crane House** to open its doors to the public for the first time in 1996.

— *By Susan Rosenberg, Asbury Park Historical Society
Trustee and Secretary*

Trustee Mary Damato honored for years of service

At our recent 15th anniversary celebration, the APHS paid tribute to a dedicated member of our organization, without whom that milestone would never have been possible. As our treasurer and longest-serving trustee, **Mary Damato** (pictured at the June 12 event with City Historian Werner Baumgartner) played a major role in helping the Society transition from a "homeless" group of local history buffs, to an active and engaged presence in the community.

A native of the Weequahic section of Newark, Mary became a resident of Asbury Park in 1984. Fascinated by the rich and colorful history of her new home, Mary brought her years of banking business experience to the table, when the Asbury Park Historical Society was incorporated in 2001.

Even serious injury in a 2015 car accident couldn't slow Mary down, as the new year saw her resume her duties with the dedication and attention to detail we've come to



expect and appreciate. Mary's warm smile and energy continue to illuminate community events, and we are happy to call her a colleague and a friend.



A group of Boy Scouts from Oakhurst Troop 71 joined community volunteers in cleaning and landscaping the Crane House property, as part of Evan DeMont's Eagle Scout Project. Left to right: Matt DeMont, Evan DeMont, Quincy Sutherland, Tommie Lavin and Colin Lavin.

CRANE HOUSE Continued from Page 1

Boasting a professional re-plastering and repaired moldings, the room was stripped down to its original wood by trustees **Don Stine** and **Andy Skokos**, then freshly painted with the volunteer assistance of **Steve Merlin**, **Jerry List** and **James Waters**. A professional wallcover-

ing specialist did a super job putting up a paper pattern evocative of the late 19th century, and even papered the ceiling (as was a custom then) with a reflective pattern.

Sporting a lighter, airier feel than before, the parlor features less clutter while also showing off several “new” items — including an 1870s mantel clock, a Victorian-era baby carriage and antique stereopticons — acquired from Heaven Art and Antiques, the Ocean Grove Historical Society and other sources. A new vintage-style chandelier, rug and curtains were also installed.

The refresh has extended to the front of the former Arbutus Cottage, where as part of an Eagle Scout project coordinated by **Evan DeMont** of Oakhurst, a group of community volunteers have cleaned up the yard and prepared areas for plantings of flowers and shrubs. A dead tree will be removed from the rear of the property, and an antique concrete Wishing Well from the old Mayfair Theatre will be installed adjacent to the front porch.

The afternoon of June 26 welcomed attendees to a renewed series of free classic film screenings in the Lecture Room, and also inaugurated our summer schedule of public-welcome house tour hours. Stop by any **Sunday from 12 to 2 pm** for a guided tour of our national and state historic site, or make an appointment for any other day of the week by calling **732-361-0189**.

Free public events at the Stephen Crane House

SUN. JULY 31: The annual Summer Opera Film Series continues with Verdi's “**Rigoletto**,” screening at 3 pm with doors opening 2:30

SUN. AUGUST 28: The annual Summer Opera Film Series concludes with Mario Lanza in “**For the First Time**” (1959), screening at 3 pm with doors opening 2:30

SAT. OCT. 1: Mayor Emeritus Ed Johnson opens a new

series of “**Lights! Camera! Politics!**” events with “**All the President's Men**” (1976), screening at 3 pm with doors opening 2:30

Follow us on Facebook for updates on other entries in the Politics series...along with a September event TBA, our annual Halloween program (Oct.), our birthday-month salute to Stephen Crane (Nov.), and the return of our holiday Season's Readings (Dec.)!

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

