

# Harrington Park Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 105, Harrington Park, New Jersey 07640

Newsletter #1

November 2002

## **"The First Issue"**

You are now reading the very "first issue" of the Harrington Park Historical Society's "Newsletter." The purpose is, of course, to keep you informed of the Society's activities, to let you know future plans and dreams, and to "throw-in" a little bit of history too! I hope you enjoy the read, and would let me know if you'd like to see additions. If you want an article published or some information passed along to the members, please send it to the post office box, and I'll try to include it in our next issue (the more news and articles, the better). The next issue would be sometime in mid-January. So, here we go folks – hang on to your seats – and, please let me know your comments (only good, of course).

Your faithful servant\*, Gerri Gibney

\* I always like to use a closing for a newsletter, and so I've chosen "Your faithful servant" because to me it sounds so "18<sup>th</sup> century" and I believe I should have been an 18<sup>th</sup> century lady, instead of a 20<sup>th</sup> (this is not a typo) century person.

## **MEMBERSHIP SOARS !**

Thanks to the hard work and diligence of our Membership Chair,

Lorraine Wolfangel-Hall, our membership has taken off. Lorraine has made so many phone calls and follow-ups, Ma Bell plans to hold a dinner in her honor. All kidding aside, her work has brought in many new members to the Society. Being a relatively new group, almost fifty members are truly amazing. We have many plans, and we thank you for your support. Whether you are interested in working on a committee, look forward to our varied guest lecturers, or want to financially support the Society, your involvement is sincerely valued and appreciated. But, don't just keep all "the good stuff" the Society has to offer to you, bring your friends and neighbors to our meetings to share in the fun, there's always room for one more.

## **H.P. To Celebrate 100 Years**

The borough of Harrington Park will celebrate its centennial of incorporation in 2004, and the Society has laid some great plans to observe the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Society's Executive Committee met and put together the following goals as our part in the celebration; 1.) Given that the 2004 date is the date of the incorporation, and that the history of the area goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we thought it

important to show the history leading to the 1904 date, and so it was decided to research all the people buried in the Blauvelt Cemetery (this project, will, of course, take longer than one year to complete, however, we will present our findings as we proceed) 2.) A "History Hike" would be conducted of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> homes to illustrate the homes constructed during that time period. We have tentatively scheduled this hike for May 2004. 3.) Two of our monthly meetings would reflect the anniversary. The first would be an update on our findings concerning the Blauvelt Cemetery, and the second a lecture on how and the why the Bergen County towns started to incorporate at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 4.) We would conduct a major fundraiser (white tie) to be held sometime in September, its focus would be the Bergen County Historical Commission's Site Survey of Harrington Park followed by a reception and musical entertainment 5.) The Society would mount quarterly exhibits, and 6.) A Strawberry Festival possibly conducted with other organizations. As you can see this is a most ambitious plan, and there is lots of opportunity for all members to be involved. We will begin setting up committees at our January meeting, so give some thought to where you might like to pitch-in.

Dave Ross is our liaison to the borough's Centennial Committee; he is also in charge of the research of the cemetery (which, I might add, he has already begun work on). If you are interested in doing independent research, please see Dave at our

meeting or phone him at 201-768-3621. If you have historical papers or artifacts, which you would like to donate or loan to the Society, please contact Dave, and he will catalog the items before turning them over to our archivists.

### **Steuben House Outing**

December 2<sup>ND</sup> is our outing to the 18<sup>th</sup> Steuben House in River Edge. We will be treated to a private tour of the house, followed by a reception at the New Bridge Inn. Assorted Hors D'oeuvres and a special dessert are on the menu along with coffee and tea, cash bar. The cost is \$15.00 members, \$20.00 non-members. We will leave the borough hall parking lot at 7:00 P.M. sharp and car pool to the Steuben House. If you want to go, please call Lorraine Wolfangel-Hall immediately. Her number is 201-767-9027.

### **A BIT OF HISTORY... THE FIRST PUBLIC TREES**

The idea of public or community Christmas trees originated in America. They were usually placed outdoors. The city of Pasadena, California, put a lighted tree atop Mount Wilson in 1909. A 60-foot tree was set up in Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1919. In Philadelphia the annual children's Christmas tree has been an institution for many decades, as has the tree that is set upon Boston Common. A large, extravagantly decorated and lighted tree has been set upon the lawn of the White House every year since President Calvin Coolidge began the custom in 1923. The ceremony of turning on the lights is a national ritual. The practice of installing a tree inside the White House started in 1856 with President Franklin Pierce. -- Does anyone know when the lighting of the Harrington Park tree began? Let me know... Your faithful servant, Gerri Gibney