

Harrington Park Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. BOX 105, Harrington Park, NJ 07640

President's Report

Notes, Narration, and Natter *from Gerri Gibney*

We've been through quite a whirl in recent months. And, yes I would say that as a Society we made some history too!

First, the October fund raiser held at United Water was a great success! Thanks to the members, friends of the Society, and our neighbors who turned out to support us, we made \$1200 to



Figure 1 HPHS members John Vigna, Lynne Block, Gerri Gibney, Esther Ross, Tom Betancourt, and Caryl Block enjoying United Water Company's patio at Fund Raiser on October 1, 2004.

"shore up the wall" at the Old Burying Ground. Quite an accomplishment! People are already asking, when is the next one? We don't have a firm date yet, but we do know it will be in October 2005.

In conjunction with our efforts at the Old Burying Ground, we have developed a pamphlet briefly describing the property and its historical significance, the work that has already begun, and our future plans for the cemetery. The booklet also speaks to the immediate need to install some type of retaining wall. We plan to mail this booklet to every household in Harrington Park in February 2005. We have also begun looking into possible grant money from various sources to help defer the cost of building the retaining wall.

October also included "Harrington Park History Day," a first-time event for the Society. The pictorial story boards created for the centennial, which have been exhibited on a rotating basis



Figure 2 Examining some historical images on History Day, October 16, 2004

throughout the year at the Library, were all displayed together on History Day, and they were the star of the day. Visitors had an opportunity to reminisce as well as learn new information from the words and pictures. We did receive artifacts, pictures, and documents, all of which will now be part of the archives of the Society. This was such a successful day that we are planning to have the event again on Saturday, April 16, 2005.

For those of you who could not attend our "History Hike" in September, conducted by Davis Ross at the Old Burying Ground, you missed a goody. Dave and his crew have done a terrific job cleaning up the cemetery, and Dave has done an outstanding job of researching the cemetery. Through his ongoing investigations of the cemetery, we are beginning to learn about the people buried there, and the small community that began over 200 years ago. Everyone enjoyed this informative and fascinating stroll through local history.

Following the September (Todd Braisted on "Bergen County Loyalists") and October (Vince Gargiulo on "Palisades Amusement Park") sessions, our November meeting was a talk on the "Long Pond Ironworks" presented by Beth Timsak, President of the Friends of Long Pond Ironworks. Beth gave a slide presentation showing the history of the ironworks as well as the village and its people that grew up to support the activities of the mine. The history of the mine and its relation to the early growth of our country and its importance to the Revolutionary War as well as the Civil War was fascinating. Her talk also



Figure 3 Beth Timsak addressing the HPHS meeting, November 1, 2004

brought to mind, that what could have been buildings falling down, now are in fact saved structures – and in some cases restored ones, through the efforts of this marvelous organization. If you did not attend this meeting, you can learn more about the Village at their website www.longpondironworks.org.

One last word about our Society and the many opportunities available for our members to participate in helping to preserve the history of our small part of the world called Harrington Park. If you want to become more "hands-on" we can always use your help on our special projects which include History Day, fund raisers, cemetery clean-up and research, articles for the newsletter, docent, inventorying and archiving, hosting our meetings, and licking, sticking, and stuffing our mailings. There's more too, but this is just to get you thinking! Don't be bashful; call me at 201 768-2615.

Your faithful servant, Gerri Gibney

Historical Tidbits [Davis Ross]

Yard Sale - 1848 When area resident David A. Haring died intestate, the Surrogate's court appointed Haring's neighbor Cornelius Eckerson, Jr. to administer the estate for the widow Maria and her 2 daughters, Elizabeth and Rachel. Eckerson held a sale of Haring's personal items at the widow's home on December 14, 1848. He recorded the details of that sale in his "writing book." We will be sharing some of the information from this important source here and in future *Newsletters*. That "yard sale" over 150 years ago netted the estate \$296.80½. As one can imagine a number of items were expensive; Eckerson himself purchased a horse for \$22.50, and the widow a cow for \$20. Most of the items sold, however, for what appears to modern eyes as real

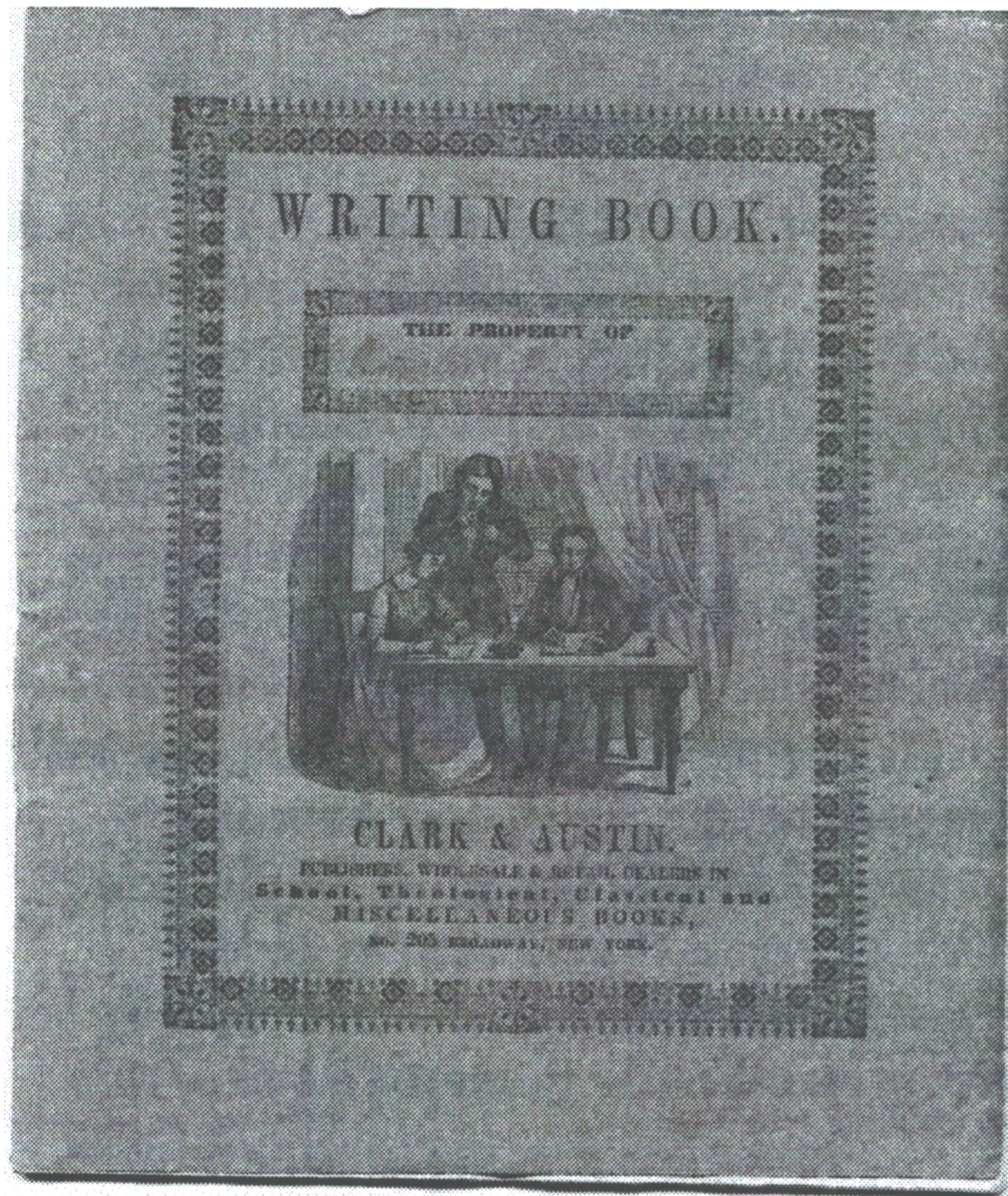


Figure 4: Cornelius Eckerson Jr.'s writing book
[promised gift to the Society from Anne Kruger]

bargains – quilts for \$.75, feather beds at the same amount, blankets for as little as \$.09. Interestingly the widow in effect was forced to buy her own bed linens, beds, kitchen ware, and so forth. Here's a brief, greatly abbreviated list of Maria Haring's purchases (from p. 19 of the writing book) :

Curtains	\$1.00
Table cloth	.37
Books	.50
Bible	1.00
Closet	2.00
Feather Bed	3.00
Bed	1.00
Straw-Bed	.50

One can glimpse lifestyles of the mid 19th century from Eckerson's writing book, as we will demonstrate in future *Newsletters*.

Old Burying Ground 1st burial? Visitors to the cemetery on Tappan road are informed by an historical marker (put up in 1972) that "the earliest known burial was in 1722." Unfortunately, one would not easily find evidence for that assertion in strolling through the grounds today. The stone that bears that date was described in a 1910 inventory (the earliest documentary reference found to date) as follows: "One [stone] was for 1722 G I B I G I B large grey stone very broad and thick[.]" Later lists (1934, 1947) do not add much; the former does not mention the stone and the latter notes "This one was a rude stone on which only the figures 1720 were legible. The stone was a large granite boulder and the letters were rudely carved thereon." If 1722 is a correct reading of the inscription, it would precede by 1 year the earliest European settler to what we now call

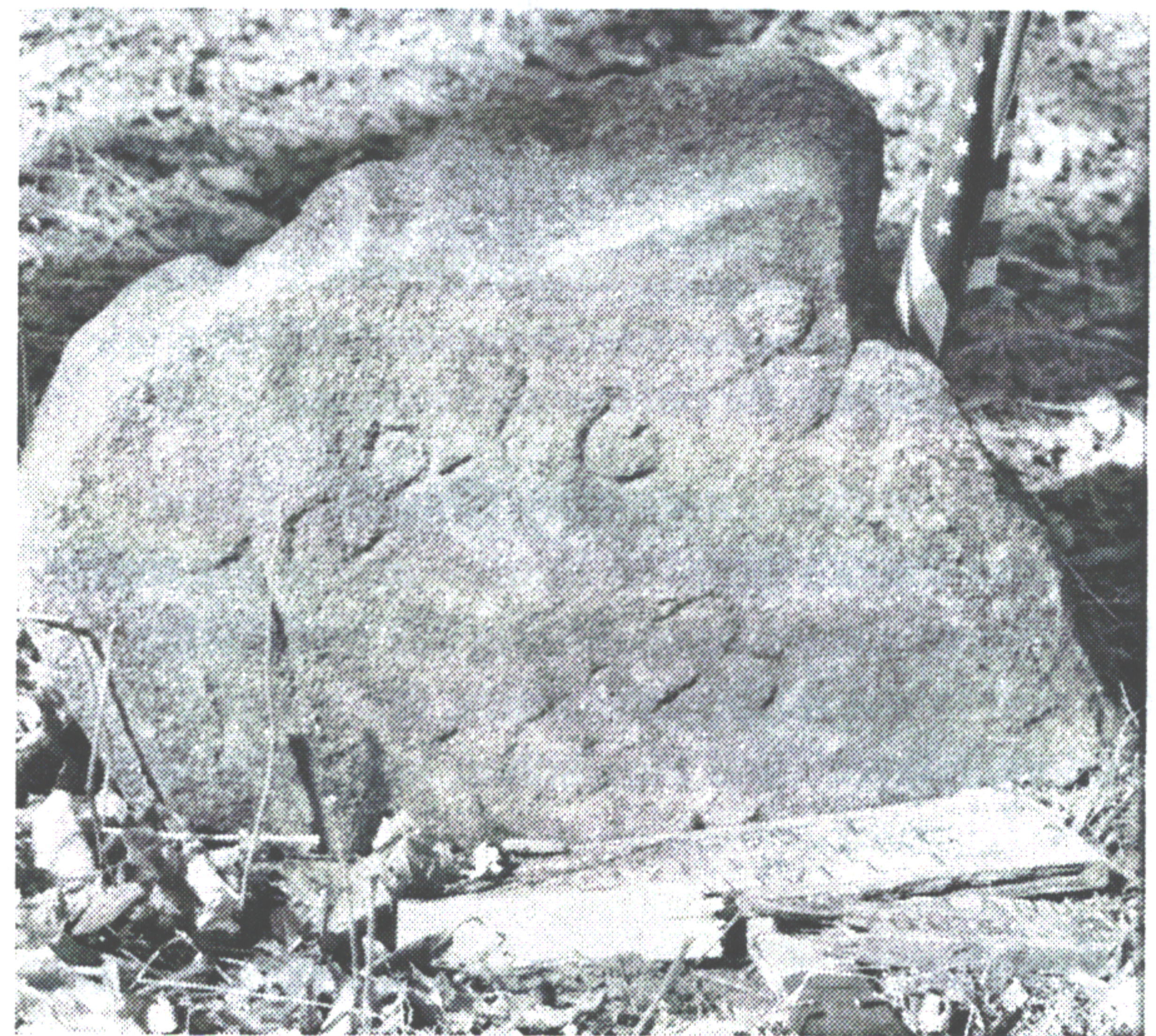


Figure 5: "GHB" stone

Harrington Park. As for the initials they *could* stand for Gerrit Huybertsen Blauvelt (b 1680, unknown death date); but the standard genealogical source for the Blauvelt family shows no link to the area save for his marriage at Tappan in 1712. Of course this "boulder" may not be a head stone, for it could be a boundary marker instead. In any event, until we learn more, discretion suggests that 1722 not be used as the beginning date. So what is that date? Stayed tuned for sequels in future *Newsletters*!

Other News

Scott Barretta awarded Scouting Highest Honor. While on the subject of the Old Burying Ground, we should pause again to thank Eagle

Scout Scott Barretta for his project to rebuild the stairs leading into the site. On October 31, 2004 Scott was formally inducted into the highest level of the Boy Scouts at a court of honor

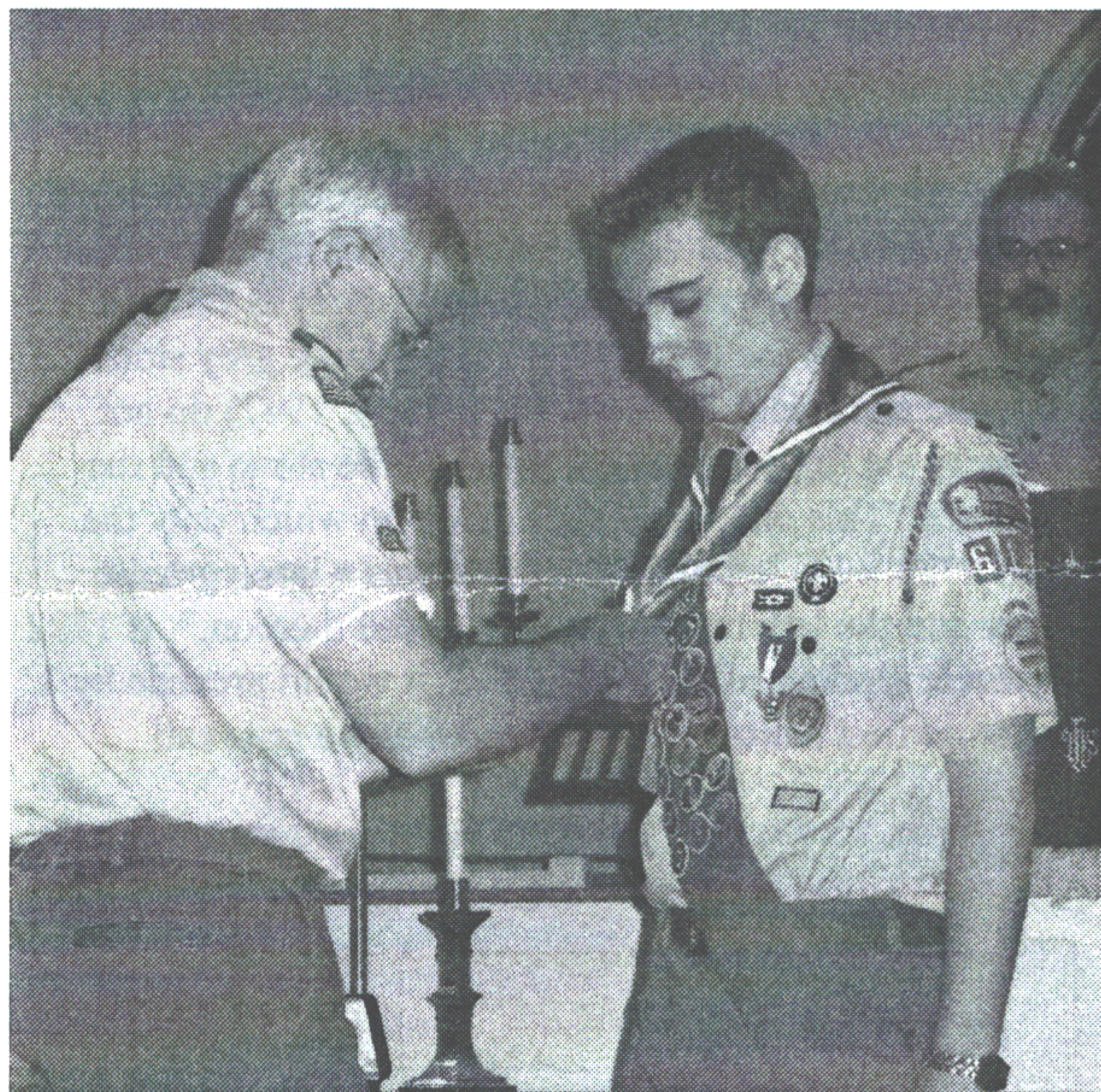


Figure 6: Scoutmaster Tom Betancourt awards Eagle Scout Scott Barretta the emblematic bandanna

ceremony at the Community Church. Good luck and thanks again to Scott – and to his father Bob, Scott's associates among his troop who labored to put in the new stairs, the troop's leaders, Mayor Paul Hoelscher, and DPW head Mark Kiernan

Members' Corner [Lorraine Wolfangel-Hall]

Many thanks to all who renewed their 2004-05 membership! The new Membership List, together with your membership card, will be arriving at your home shortly. Please join me in welcoming several new members, including **Lynne Block, the Deb and Rob Budinich family, Carol Jennings, Virginia and John Mager, and Marion and David Sunden.**

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please send a check to me at 19 Bluefield Avenue, payable to "HP Historical Society".

Although our rates are unchanged (\$15 for families – including children 17 years and under; \$10 for individual; and \$5 for individual students, 17 and under), membership benefits have expanded over the past year. Members who are not listed in our 2004-05 Membership List will be noted in upcoming newsletters and/or separate notices.

Please call me (201) 767-9027 if you have any questions.

Upcoming Events

December: ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOUR & TOAST: Nearly fifty members and their guests will be given a private tour of the Blauvelt House & Museum in early December. The docent, Mr. John Gibbons, grew up in the New City, NY house and is now a Harrington Park resident. After the tour, the group will toast the holidays over hors d'oeuvres and drinks, desserts, and hot beverages at the '76 House. A record number of persons signed up for this now sold-out event. *Unfortunately, unlike previous years, we are no longer able to accept members or guest the night of this event. Increasing popularity of this event, limited space, and other factors, require preregistration and prepayment.* But don't dismay—there's always next year! Photographs of the event will be displayed at our next regular meeting in January, 2005.

January: Monday, January 3, 2005, 7:30 PM, Quantmeyer Room, Library
Speaker: Tim Adriance, Professional Historic Restorations. Topic: "Dutch Colonial Houses & How They Were Built"