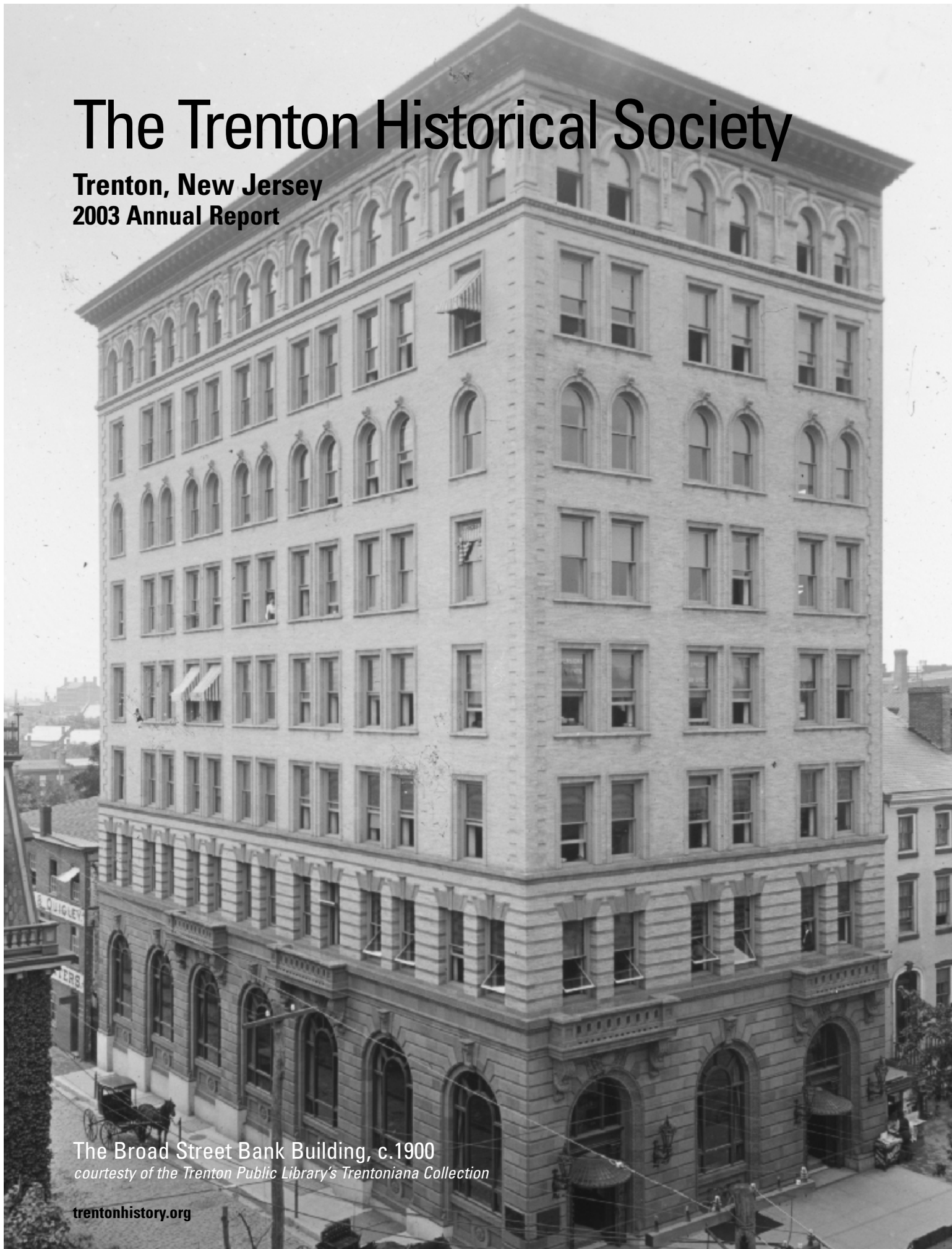


The Trenton Historical Society

Trenton, New Jersey
2003 Annual Report



The Broad Street Bank Building, c.1900
courtesy of the Trenton Public Library's Trentoniana Collection

2003 ANNUAL REPORT

The Trenton Historical Society (THS) was founded in 1919. For the entirety of its existence the society has sought to educate its members and the general public about the rich heritage of the capital city. A membership organization governed by a Board of Trustees from whom officers are selected, the THS is a New Jersey Non-Profit Corporation, and has a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. This Annual Report reflects the THS' activities during the 2003 calendar year.

PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Preserving Trenton's threatened heritage assets continued to be a top priority of the Trenton Historical Society. Work started in 2002 came to fruition in 2003, while new efforts were begun. The Trenton Top 10 Endangered Buildings List was released and publicized as part of National Preservation Week in May 2003. Two events, "In and Around Adeline: A Walking Tour of a South Trenton Neighborhood" in March, and "Stop the Wrecking Ball" in November, educated and raised funds for preservation projects. Also in November, the THS learned that a \$15,000 grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission was secured to be used to write a National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Trenton Ferry District in South Trenton.



Guests mingle at Stop the Wrecking Ball

Trenton Top 10 Endangered Buildings List

Throughout 2002, the Endangered Buildings working group was busy surveying and compiling an extensive list of buildings of historic or architectural significance throughout the city. In 2003, the buildings were further evaluated and ranked based on their significance and potential threats. Drawing inspiration from Preservation New Jersey's annual list of the state's most endangered historic sites, the Preservation Committee released the Top 10 Most Endangered list for buildings found in Trenton. With this, the THS hopes to focus attention on some of the capital city's most interesting buildings and history.

The Trenton Top 10:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Broad Street Bank Building | 6. The Delaware Inn/ Champale Office Building |
| 2. Horsman Doll Factory | 7. D&R Canal Houses |
| 3. Mercer County Court House | 8. Golden Swan/ Caola Building |
| 4. Trenton Psychiatric Hospital | 9. Ferdinand W. Roebling Mansion |
| 5. Trenton Savings Fund Society | 10. General Philemon Dickinson House / The Hermitage |



1. Broad Street Bank Building

(also listed in Preservation New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered Sites for 2003)

The Broad Street Bank Building is the only remaining example of an early 20th-century skyscraper in Trenton. It was built in three phases: an eight-story structure in the style of Louis Sullivan built in 1900, followed in 1913 by a 12-story addition, and by another 8-story addition in 1923. The additions use architectural details from the original structure so the entire building appears as one cohesive design.

The building marks a number of city milestones. In addition to being the first skyscraper in Trenton, it used the first steel superstructure (built from I-beams, the manufacturing process for which was developed in Trenton), the first elevator in a commercial structure, and the first revolving doors. It stands today as an important reminder of Trenton's prosperity in the first half of the 20th century. But it may not endure much longer. The building has deteriorated so badly in the decade it has been vacant, that it is now a safety hazard. While the city's master plan calls for the revitalization of the bank's downtown neighborhood, nothing has come of various reuse plans for the building. It is now a candidate for demolition. But redevelopment should be consistent with preservation. The city's first skyscraper can and should be the cornerstone of new vitality, not a ghost of previous prosperity.

2. Horsman Doll Factory

(also listed in Preservation New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered Sites for 2003)

The Horsman Doll Factory complex was the main manufacturing location of the very popular Horsman family of dolls. Built in the early 1930's, it was once considered the largest doll factory in the United States.

The one-block square complex, which at its peak had more than 800 employees, consists of two connected, three-story, brick mill buildings, plus several one-story brick additions. Because this site is the dominant feature in an otherwise residential neighborhood, it provides an important reminder of a time when workers walked to work from homes clustered around workplaces.



Doll manufacturing at the site ceased in the 1960's, though sections of the complex housed various enterprises for some time thereafter. The complex has been completely vacant for approximately 10 years, leaving a substantial vacuum in the neighborhood. But these handsome buildings are structurally sound and offer enormous market-rate redevelopment potential. Unlike many other cities, preservation minded builders in Trenton have not put loft-style condominiums and apartments in former factories. Since there are at least a dozen other buildings in the Trenton vicinity with similar prospects, the Horsman Doll Factory could exemplify for the entire region the way new housing can be provided in sensitively converted industrial buildings.



3. Mercer County Court House

Soon after the formation of Mercer County in 1838, plans were set in motion for the construction of a court house. Built at the corner of Broad and Market Streets, the original Greek Revival structure served the public until 1903. Trenton and Mercer County had grown enormously since its founding, and the current grand, classical Beaux Arts structure was built to accommodate this growth. This impressive sandstone building, with its pediments, columns and arches, occupies an important downtown gateway.

Not only a Trenton Landmark, the Court House is perhaps one of the best-known buildings in Mercer County. Still in daily use, the building is in dire need of restoration. Talk of renovation coupled with whispers of demolition have won this building a high ranking on the Top 10 Endangered List.

4. Trenton Psychiatric Hospital

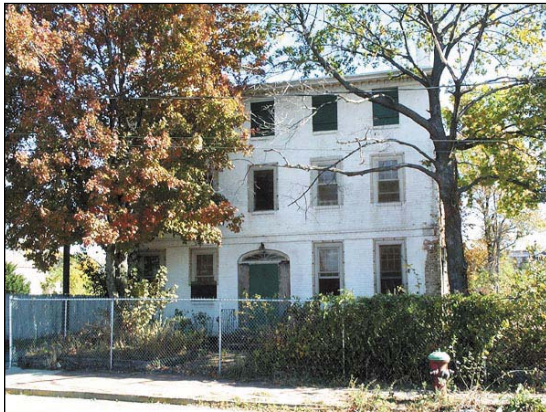
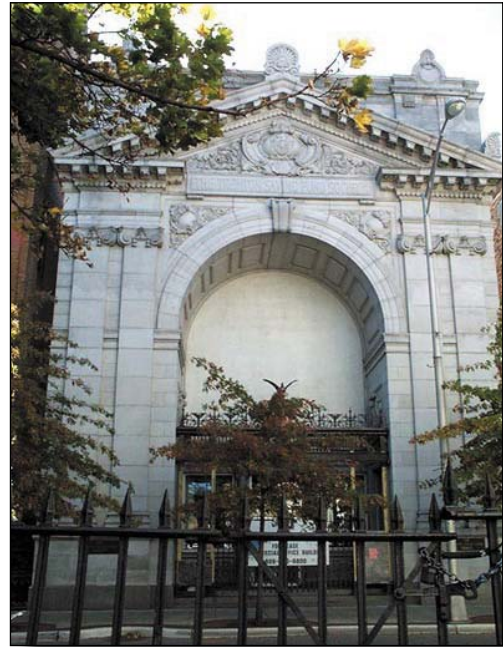
The New Jersey State Hospital Historic District occupies much of the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital's approximately 100-acre campus in Trenton and Ewing Township. The hospital was founded in 1848 at the urging of Dorothea Dix and was first known as the New Jersey Lunatic Asylum. It was the first institution established in New Jersey for the mentally ill. The hospital today includes an extensive campus with large, primarily stone buildings constructed during the mid-19th and early 20th centuries



amid beautifully landscaped grounds. Noted Philadelphia architect John Notman and nationally significant landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing were responsible for the property's original plan. The historic district buildings include the main hospital, a cafeteria, a laundry, a firehouse, a shop, a laboratory, a powerhouse, the gatehouse and several residences for the Superintendent, the Commissioner, 12 doctors and a nurse's dormitory. The New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office has determined that the site is eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The primary threat to the complex is demolition, although neglect is also taking its toll on the district.

5. Trenton Savings Fund Society

The Trenton Savings Fund Society was incorporated in 1844 and began business on July 20, 1847, in an office in the original Trenton City Hall. After moving several times, the managers decided to build a new banking house at the current location on East State Street, which was completed in April 1901. The white granite, steel structure, designed by New York architects Mowery and Affinger in the Beaux Arts style, is one of Trenton's most beautiful buildings. An equally distinguished classical vocabulary was used on the building's interior, intended to give all who did business there a sense of pride and security. The central banking room's stained glass ceiling was covered over with acoustic tiles as part of an ill-advised modernization. Now vacant for several years, the building is beginning to show signs of deterioration, neglect and vandalism.



6. The Delaware Inn / Champale Office Building

During the late 1700's and early 1800's, it was common for timber to be moved by raft down the Delaware River from upstate New York to Philadelphia. Timbers were laid side by side and lashed together, then dismantled and sold at their destination. The sight of these rafts at Trenton was common; in the spring of 1828, as many as a thousand rafts containing some 50 million board feet of lumber passed by on the river. The raftsmen invariably made an over-night stop in Lamberton (now part of Trenton's South Ward), where several inns were established to accommodate this traffic. Of these, the Red Tavern, later known as the Delaware Inn, was among the most popular. With deforestation and the increased popularity of railroad transportation, the river was used less for transporting logs and the inns suffered. In 1891, the Trenton Brewing Company, owned by the Kuser family, was built on the adjacent property and the Delaware Inn was taken over for the brewery offices. During World War II, Champale was manufactured at the plant and the site prospered until December 31, 1986, when it closed. The brewery was demolished in 1998 but the Delaware Inn was spared. Vacant and neglected, this riverfront structure is an ideal candidate for re-use.

7. D&R Canal Houses

The Delaware and Raritan Canal opened for business on June 25, 1834. Trenton, at 56 feet above sea level, was the summit with seven locks lifting boats between Bordentown and Trenton and seven more locks lowering them from Trenton to New Brunswick. Trenton was the hub of a transportation network that connected the city to major markets in Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore, and to raw materials (primarily coal) from Pennsylvania. At the blast of a coal boat's horn or a yacht's whistle, bridge tenders swung Trenton's bridges aside to make way for canal traffic. Each lock tender and bridge tender was provided with a home as a condition of his employment. In December 1932, the canal closed to commercial traffic. The D&R



Canal, along with the houses, was entered on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1973 and the following year Gov. Brendan Byrne signed a bill creating the D&R Canal State Park. The three canal houses in Trenton have had tenants over the years, but both the Calhoun Street and Hanover Street houses are now vacant and in disrepair.

8. Golden Swan / Caola Building

For almost two centuries, the building at the southwest corner of Front and Warren Streets stood as an important commercial establishment. When built, it was one of the largest structures in town. It has been the home to the Golden Swan Tavern, the Sign of the Swan, the Swan Inn and Mechanics Hall. In addition to taverns, the building at one time housed The Daily True American. Later uses included an upholstery business, a furniture store, a tinsmith shop, and from 1921 until the 1990's, the Caola locksmith business. A keystone of the Warren Street Historic District, the building is currently an eyesore. Recent development possibilities raised hope for the restoration of the building but the future of the site is uncertain.



9. Ferdinand W. Roebling Mansion

John A. Roebling, German immigrant, inventor of wire-rope cable and designer of the Brooklyn Bridge, left a legacy of creative thinking to the three sons—Washington, Charles and Ferdinand—who would carry on the family business. The Roebling brothers built several grand homes along West State Street from the late 19th to the early 20th century, but 222 West State Street is the only Roebling mansion still standing. It was the home of Ferdinand W. Roebling, Sr., secretary-treasurer of John A. Roebling's Sons Company.



Both his son, Ferdinand W. Roebling, Jr. (the driving force behind the fund-raising effort to build Trinity Cathedral) and grandsons lived in the house over time. Later, it was used for legal offices. The building is listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places and has weathered several bouts of controversy since 1990, when a local developer wanted to demolish it for a new office building, and later when the city planned demolition. Saved by the efforts of local preservationists and the City of Trenton, there is talk of restoring and expanding this important site, but currently it stands vacant and neglected.



10. General Philemon Dickinson House / The Hermitage

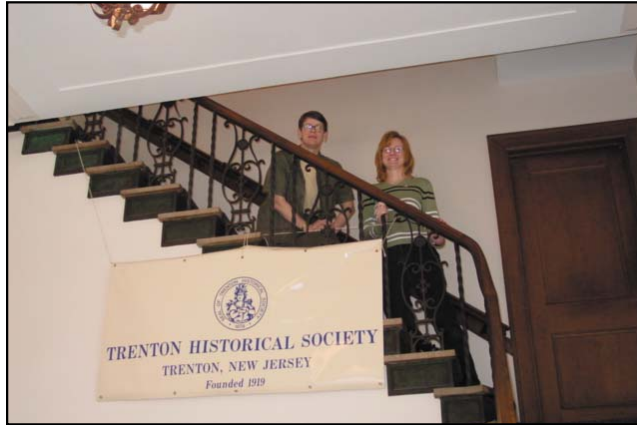
This stone house was originally built and occupied by the Rutherford family. It was purchased in 1776, shortly before the Battle of Trenton, by General Philemon Dickinson, commander-in-chief of the New Jersey Militia during the Revolutionary War. The house was occupied for many years by the Dickinson family, which entertained many

famous people within its walls including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Witherspoon, Generals Greene and Knox and Joseph Bonaparte. The exterior of the house was considerably remodeled in the mid-19th century and its interior was altered for use as an apartment house in 1905. Listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places, this important piece of Trenton's history is a prime candidate for rehabilitation.

In and Around Adeline: A Walking Tour of a South Trenton Neighborhood

This self-guided walking tour introduced visitors to the late 19th- and early 20th-century neighborhood centered around Adeline Street. Industrial workers and their families, consisting

of immigrants from several countries throughout Eastern Europe, settled the area. Several churches representing the various ethnic and national origins of the neighborhood's early residents were open for viewing. Also on the tour were the Skelton branch library, the Catholic Youth Organization, Horsman Doll Factory and the public spaces in the old Cigar Factory, rehabilitated for loft apartments. Approximately 80 people explored the neighborhood around Adeline.



Organizers Sally Lane & Jennifer Leynes at Skelton Library

Stop the Wrecking Ball

The hugely successful "Stop the Wrecking Ball" was held on Saturday, November 22, 2003, at the Trenton Trust Building. Approximately 180 guests and friends of preservation attended this black-tie event to share in an elegant evening to raise awareness and funds for the many preservation needs throughout Trenton. The main counting room of the building was adorned with plants and elegant table settings, and lit by the original chandeliers and candles generously donated by Ana Design. While guests chatted, they were entertained by a local jazz group, the Andy Keenan trio, and hors d'oeuvres were provided by Utopia Bistro.

A silent auction of Trenton memorabilia and art created by local artists took place throughout most of the evening. Items included spare doors salvaged from an historic building, gift baskets by local businesses, posters illustrating the dome of the State House, original paintings

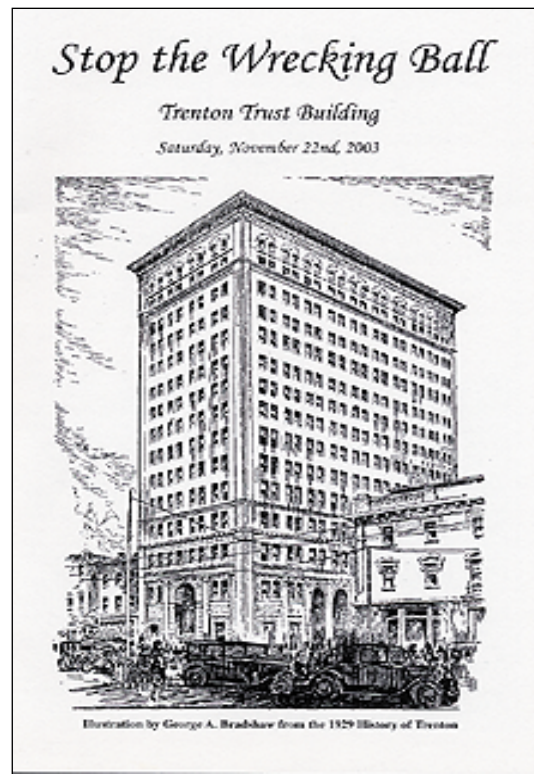


Eager bidders inspect potential purchases

of local Trenton streets, and the crowning jewel, an 1809 bible published by Mill Hill printer, Daniel Fenton. All donations to the silent auction found new homes that evening. To top off the evening, guided tours of the original, spectacular vaults were held, invoking awe among the guests who came in contact with the 60,000-pound vault door.

Like the earlier Kelsey Building, the 1925 Trenton Trust was inspired by Florentine buildings of the Renaissance. Travertine marble floors, Tavernelle marble wainscoting and a deep-coffered ceiling copied from a Florentine abbey decorate what was the Main Counting Room.

The bank's architect, Alfred Bossom of New York, specialized in banks. The circular door of the main Safe Deposit Vault, much photographed for stories of the bank's opening, is stainless steel and weighs 60,000 pounds. The Trenton Trust name had been lost to an earlier merger when the banking space closed in July of 1995 after another merger. A special thanks goes to Aegis Property Group for the maintenance of the handsome space, which is ready for an imaginative reuse, and for their kind generosity for allowing the first "Stop the Wrecking Ball" to be held in such a splendid space!



Saving the Broad Street Bank Building

At the top of the Endangered Buildings list is the Broad Street National Bank Building, which was constructed between 1900-1923. This prominent and elegant building was Trenton's first skyscraper and important in the city's banking and commercial communities. This now vacant building is threatened by neglect. In October 2003, members of the Trenton Preservation Committee and concerned citizens began meeting to discuss how best to begin the campaign to save the Broad Street Bank Building. The plan the group decided on—to begin in 2004—would consist of letters of concern to the Mayor and City Council and a letter to the current absentee landlords of the building expressing dismay at their lack of action. The campaign would also include letters to Trenton's friends of preservation, urging local residents to contact elected officials and urge them to pursue plans for the building. It was hoped that through this first step, the campaign to save the Broad Street Bank Building would gain momentum and encourage others to take action.

ARTIFACTS COMMITTEE

In this, its first full year of operation, the Artifacts Committee of the THS continued to fulfill its charge to identify and acquire items from the city's past to preserve them and make them available to researchers. The repository for items the Committee obtained is the Trentoniana Room of the Trenton Public Library. The Committee's six areas of focus remained unchanged including schools (yearbooks, newspapers); industries & businesses (catalogs, records); middle- and working-class families (photos, letters); ethnic groups (social & religious group records); city neighborhoods (civic association information); and the Douglass House.

In 2003, the Artifacts Committee acquired 229 items or groups of items. Most acquisitions were single items, but some were collections, such as a series of photographs of 1930's Trenton sports teams or the papers of Dr. Howard Magee, medical director of the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital in the 1950's. Perhaps not the most valuable item obtained but certainly one that best exemplifies the spirit of the Committee was an Indian arrowhead. The Committee received a



Arrowhead found in Stacy Park in 1923

letter from an 83-year-old California woman seeking to return an item she found in 1923 while on an outing in Stacy Park. To a five-year-old's eyes, the arrowhead was nothing more than a "pretty stone." But as an adult—realizing the item's significance—her attempts to return the arrowhead were unsuccessful until she found THS' address on the Internet. Now in the Trentoniana Room, the arrowhead is at home for future generations to admire.

The 229 Trenton-related items were catalogued and donated to the Trenton Public Library. These items included 173 documents, 51 photographs and 5 other objects. Of the total, 166 items were purchased by the Committee, 59 were gifts and, although our preference is for collecting the original item, 4 were copies. The Artifacts Committee has obtained a diverse selection that would have remained in private hands, but are now available for use by researchers and the general public in the Trentoniana Room.

The Artifacts Committee continued to spread its message through the THS website and flyers. In addition to these measures, the Committee again reached out to collectors through a speaking engagement at the Washington Crossing Postcard Club in January. Finally, the Committee received broad coverage as the subject of a segment on WZBN-TV news.

PROGRAMS

For many years, the principal method of fulfilling the THS' core educational mission has been the lecture series. Program director, Mary Alice Quigley, arranged three lectures for 2003. At the Annual Meeting on January 5, Lance E. Metz, historian at the National Canal Museum in Easton, Pennsylvania, presented a slide lecture on "John A. Roebling's Pennsylvania Connections." On May 18, 2003, researcher Deborah Kelly presented an illustrated lecture, "The Women's Heritage Trail." Given in conjunction with National Preservation Week, the program showed significant sites related to women's history in New Jersey with an emphasis on Mercer County. For the fall meeting, which was held at the Old Barracks Museum on November 9, Bernard A. Olsen, author of *Upon The Tented Field*, gave a slide presentation on the role of New Jersey's volunteer Union regiment.



Betsy Means as Mother Jones

In the summer of 2003, the THS stepped out of the lecture halls and into the streets as co-sponsor with the Trenton Public Library of the Trenton leg of the 100th anniversary reenactment of Mother Jones' March of the Mill Children. In July of 1903, Mary "Mother" Jones, a controversial labor leader, gathered together a ragtag army of mill children, including many who had already been maimed by factory machinery, and marched them from the textile mills outside Philadelphia to President Teddy Roosevelt's doorstep in Oyster Bay, Long Island. Mother Jones and her army stopped in Trenton on that historic march, where she delivered a passionate speech to a crowd of 2,000 at the base of the Battle Monument. While the crowd that gathered in 2003 to hear the reenactment was not as large, "Mother Jones" enlisted an enthusiastic group of local boys and girls to be her "mill children."



March of the "Mill Children"

OUTREACH

The Trenton Historical Society launched its website at the end of 2001. Throughout 2002, new information was added to the site about the Society and Trenton. In 2003, the THS continued this growth pattern and received an impressive 18,566 visits to its website. This number is more than four times the hits received in 2002. Of these visits, the largest number of the 80,000 page views was of the obituaries page, receiving 7,215 page views—by far the most popular destination. In 2003, the website was greatly improved by two interns from The College of New Jersey. The interns added obituary indexes and additional years of the Edmund Hill Diaries.

THS' presence on the Internet has also resulted in an influx of new inquires about Trenton and its history. Over 300 emails were received and answered on subjects ranging from historic city neighborhoods to items manufactured by Trenton industries. By far the most frequently asked questions dealt with family history.

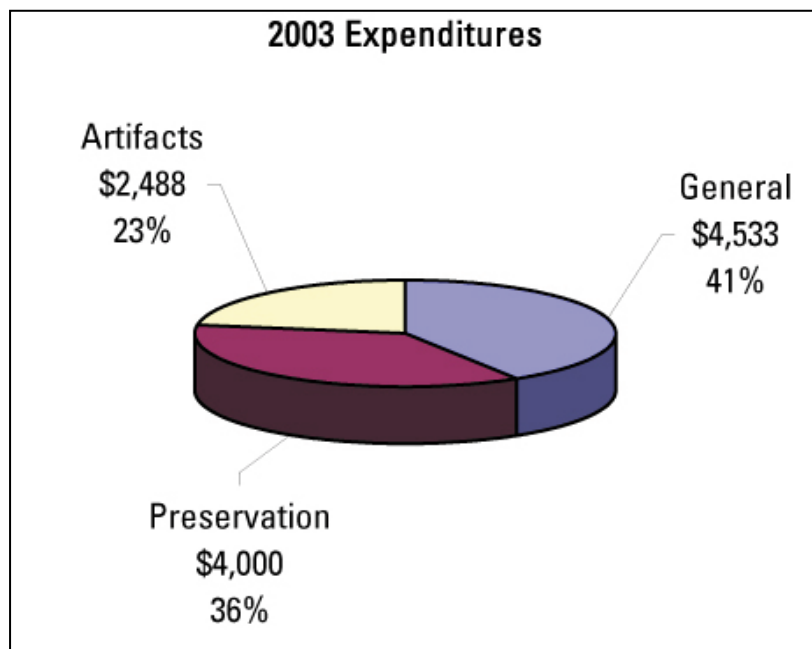


Trenton Convention and Visitors Center in the old Masonic Temple

Beginning in 2003, the THS took over operation of the weekly “Walk This Way” tours of downtown Trenton. These approximately 2-hour walking tours, covering over 300 years of history, started at the Trenton Convention and Visitors Center at the Corner of Barrack and Lafayette Streets. The tour featured such sites as the Old Barracks, the Corner Historic, Old City Hall and the site of Trenton’s first settlement at the Broad Street Bridge over the Assumpink Creek. As a supplement to the tour, guides carried albums containing numerous historic photographs of existing sites as well as those lost to memory.

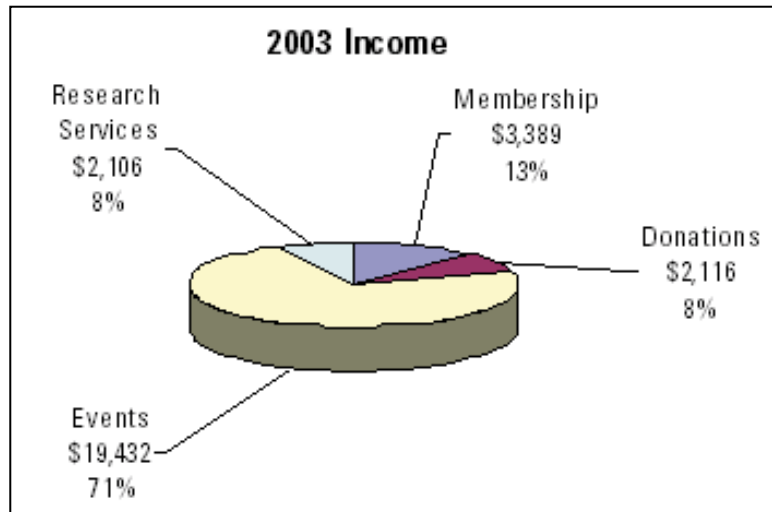
SOCIETY OPERATIONS

A Board of Trustees elected at the Annual Meeting by the membership governs the Trenton Historical Society. In 2003, the Board consisted of David Collier, President; Michael Olszak, Vice-President; Wendy Nardi, Recording Secretary; Arthur Forman, Corresponding Secretary; Gary Nigh, Treasurer; Sara Andre; Beth Feltus; Jerome Harcar; John Hatch, A.I.A.; Peter Kasabach; and Sally Lane. Among this group were two academics, an architect, a librarian and other concerned citizens who brought diverse talents to the THS. In recognition of their years of service to the Society, William Beitel, Beth Briegel, Elizabeth Hagedorn, Frances Myers-O'Brien, George Pearson, AIA, "Peg" Zimmerman, CPA, and "Zip" Zimmerman served as Trustees Emeritus.

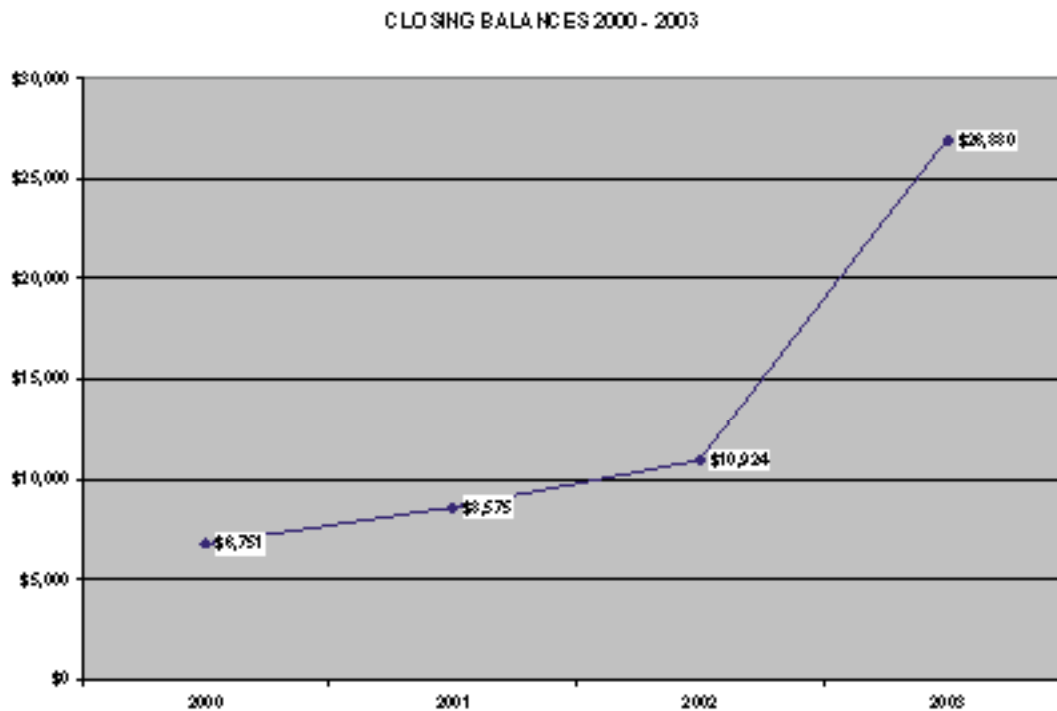


No organization can run without money to fuel its various activities. In 2003, the Trenton Historical Society spent \$11,086 and took in \$27,043, with funds divided into three main categories: General, Preservation and Artifacts. The General category included everything not covered by one of the two main committees, Preservation and Artifacts. Among the major items under General were all educational program activities, membership, and operating expenses, accounting for 40% of expenditures (\$4,533). With slightly more than \$4,000 in expenses, the Preservation Committee employed its funds to present several important events, as well as supporting its regular operations. The Artifacts Committee spent all its money (\$2,488) on the purchase of Trenton-related items.

Membership dues at \$3,389 were supplemented by donations of \$2,116, proceeds from events of just under \$19,432, and research services of \$2,106.



Fortunately, thanks in large part to the generosity of members, the THS ended 2003 with a balance of \$26,880, almost 150% higher than its starting figure, continuing the steady growth pattern of the last several years.



LOOKING AHEAD

The Trenton Historical Society seeks to build on its strong performance in 2003, and will continue to enhance its successful programs while aspiring to broaden its horizons through initiatives to meet its continuing mission.

Goals for 2004 and beyond:

- Use grant funds to create the Trenton Ferry Historic District in South Trenton
- Promote awareness of the Top 10 endangered buildings in Trenton
- Find innovative ways to combine tourism with historic preservation
- Select an endangered building in dire need of stabilization
- Conduct workshops to inform the public on historic preservation issues
- Continue to acquire Trenton artifacts
- Update the THS website

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Annual Report 2003**



**The Broad Street Bank Building
During Construction c.1898**

courtesy of the Trenton Public Library's Trentonian Collection