

SADDLE BROOK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SADDLE BROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY – JULY 2014

STATE OF NEW JERSEY PRESERVATION AWARD 2014

It was gratifying to know that our Historical Society's hard work and tenacity have been recognized. The history of our township has received the Bergen County Historic Preservation Award for 2013, a New Jersey State Assembly Citation for Outstanding Achievement and, finally, on May 22, a State of New Jersey Historic Preservation



Award for 2014. The last award was one of eleven issued throughout the state. Our history, *Saddle Brook: A Portrait of Our Past*, was the only book to receive an award. The others were for restoration projects. Original research and the book's contribution to the history of New Jersey were key factors in winning the award. Before Historical Society member Howard Mulder and I decided to begin the book, our township had only a small booklet written by The Saddle Brook Woman's Club in 1961 as a record of our township's rich past. Both Howard and I are lifelong township residents. Howard's family, Vandalinda, was among the oldest in the New York-New Jersey area and dates back to 1650 in Manhattan. We both saw the township's transition from a farming community to the bedroom community that it is today. Howard's grandfather, Samuel, was one of two township residents known to have served in the Civil War. He later built several houses which remain today. Howard worked for the municipality, and I worked for the schools as a vice-principal, principal and assistant superintendent. Howard also served on our fire department for 51 years, including two years as chief. In short, we knew Saddle Brook. Even though I began my career in education as an English teacher, I was always

interested in history in general and local history specifically. Howard's forte was with computerization, and he laboriously copied 150 photographs which the society was able to collect. Alma Henderson, our Library Director, was highly supportive of the project and generously provided many needed resources, while a wonderful lady, Jeanette Gallagher, volunteered to type the first manuscript.

An initial meeting in 2011 drew some great helpers. Robert Brantner, Peter Lo Dico, Herb Larsen, Amy Higgins, John Sistar, Alma Hendeson, Rose Stingo, Siou Choy Schafer and Linda Pellicier. Bruce Johnson and Richard Ardito joined the group later. Donna DeAngelis of Clark Publishing Company should also be considered as a member since she put in untold hours wonderfully formatting what was pretty much a rough draft. We will always be indebted to her.

The awards ceremony was held at the historic Prallsville Mills in Stockton. Howard Mulder, Robert Brantner, my wife Catherine and I attended. Each award recipient was asked to speak, and I was able to discuss the book. I noted that the dedicated participants and our outstanding VFW Post 4384 which saw merit in our mission and funded the cost of publishing were essential components in winning the award.

Our latest efforts involve developing historical displays in our library and providing relevant and interesting articles on our local history for our township website, saddlebrooknj.us. Joe Obiso, our webmaster, and I would like this to become a statewide model for generating interest in New Jersey history.

It was my great privilege to author *Saddle Brook: A Portrait of Our Past*. It demonstrates the intrinsic value of motivated people sharing, caring and working together.

Jack Wasdyke
Township Historian