



# Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission January 2011 Chronicle

## New project aims to improve history organizations

Commission receives  
\$18,000 grant

**C**umberland County, although recently experiencing modest growth, is known and admired primarily as a rural community dressed in the beauties of nature. But many residents are not aware that it also abounds in sites recalling the history of the country.

Here are a few examples:

There's **Greenwich** with its ties to the American Revolution; **Mauricetown** with its proud recognition of 19<sup>th</sup> century maritime industries; the **Millville Army Air Field Museum** celebrating the region's contribution to World War II; and, recalling the same time period, the **Seabrook Educational & Cultural Center** with its stark records of Japanese-American internment. There are many others scattered about the county, and they all demand recognition as part of the area's precious heritage.

It's this history that the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission wants to perpetuate and disseminate to as many county residents as possible. That goal will be considerably buttressed by an \$18,000 grant the Commission recently received

### History comes alive in Cumberland County



Above, the Mauricetown Historical Society and museum on Front Street; below, artifacts from the Millville Air Field Museum recreating the office of the Navajo "code crackers" of World War II.



Educational & Cultural Center.

from the N.J. Historical Commission. As a result of the grant, three professional consultants will be hired, who will advise four county historical organizations on how to grow and prosper, "rather than simply surviving or sustaining," said Matthew Pisarski, Principal Planner for the Commission.

#### The Organizations

The pool of potential applicants, selected from those which have previously received grants from the Commission, will include, among others:

**Cumberland County Historical Society, Jewish Historical Society of Rural South Jersey, Maurice River Historical Society, Mauricetown Historical Society, Millville Army Air Field Museum, Friends of Historic Vineland, and the Seabrook**

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# History non-profits set to expand their influence

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Because of budget constraints, the Commission Board of Directors will select four of the seven to participate.

The current history-based project is an outgrowth of a similar endeavor highlighting organizations devoted to the arts known as “Building Arts Participation,” completed in 2008. Funded by the State Council on the Arts, it identified several “impediments” to progress that also apply to history organizations. They included deficiencies in communication and promotion, and a lack of diversity in membership and board representation.

The Cultural & Heritage Commission believes that history organizations are in even greater need of improvement than the arts groups that benefited from the 2008 study. Pisarski said, “The historical organizations which participate will receive an exponential boost in their organizational stability and programmatic growth. Additionally, these positive results can be shared with other non-profits in the county and throughout the state to change many organizational decisions from being reactive to proactive.”

## The Consultants

Three professional consultants will comprise the project team advising the four history organizations:

- **Howard L. Green**, Principal Partner of Public History Partners, was the Research Director at the N.J. Historical Commission from 1982 through 2005. He is an Adjunct Professor at Drew University and Kean University and has worked on several projects including the Roebling Gatehouse Museum, an oral history of ethnic foods, the Thomas A. Edison papers, the American Labor Museum and the New Jersey Black History Sites Survey. He is also a member of the N.J. State Historic Sites Review Board.

- **Nancy Moses**, a cultural planning consultant in Philadelphia, has a diverse client base and background in working in Cumberland County. She completed Cumberland County’s Cultural Plan in 2005 and was involved in the Building Arts Participation program in 2008. Prior to her consulting business, Ms. Moses was the Executive Director of the Atwater Kent Museum in Philadelphia. Her projects include planning work for the Philadel-

phia Youth Orchestra, the Philadelphia Cultural Tourism Study for the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Brandywine Battlefield Park Master Plan.

- **Vicki W. Kramer**, who holds a Bachelor’s degree from Wellesley College and a Ph.D. from Harvard University, has spent her career working to improve board governance. Her more than 30 years’ experience includes work with such clients as the Woodlands Historic Cemetery and Mansion, the Mayor’s Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia, Philadelphia Futures, Friends of the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Each consultant will meet individually with the four governing boards and then meet as a team to make specific recommendations and programs for each board. Their findings will then be presented

to the Commission for approval. The work is set to begin early this year with a projected closing in late fall, 2011. A 24-month monitoring program will then begin, to conclude in late 2013.

Pisarski said that working with three consultants rather than just one will result in “more thoughtful and inclusive findings than what a single consultant could provide.” He also pointed out that splitting the work among the three consultants has reduced the overall expense.

He was optimistic that the end result will be well worth the time and effort. “We need to take a realistic look at these history organizations,” he said. “The goal is for each to truly understand where they want to go and give them step by step directions on how to fix their problems. We then can help them get to the top of their field in the region.” He said the participating organizations normally could not afford such experienced consultants on their own and should benefit greatly from their professional advice.

He added, “The Commission is actively working to insure that non-profits in Cumberland County have better opportunities than those out of county, to enable them to compete statewide and even surpass comparable organizations in the state.”

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