



# UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Anniversary Dinner

Our 147th anniversary dinner was held on April 10, in the Garden Restaurant on Magie Avenue in Elizabeth. About forty members and friends attended, and even the Mayor of Elizabeth, Chris Bollwage dropped in to say hello.

While this was a meeting date of the society, no actual business was conducted, but our president, Charles Shallcross, greeted everyone and made several remarks about our activities and of some of our members. He noted that Barbara La Mort had received an award as a "Woman of Excellence" and that Joanne Rajoppi's new book will be available soon. A review of the past year was given by one of our members and then it was time to serve the food.

The feature of the afternoon was a slide show and

by three local bandits back in 1920/21. During a two month period around the holiday season, these three held up twenty-one trolley cars, automobiles, and offices until they were captured because of a poorly planned robbery. They had even left footprints in the snow.

Justice was swift. Within days of their capture they were tried and sentenced to 50 to 75 years in prison.

An interesting detail was revealed when Boright noted that one of the bandits had once lived in a house in Roselle Park that was later owned by Nick Pagnetti, a Roselle Park policeman.

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## March 6, Meeting

The meeting of March 6 was held as planned in the Hanson House in Cranford. Approximately thirty members and guests attended and were treated to a pleasant

blue sky day, showing the wisdom of having changed the meeting date from February and its possible snow storms.

During the afternoon a certificate of appreciation was presented to Louise Engstrom for her many years of service to the society.

The guest speaker for the meeting was Rich Rosenthal,



who kept his audience very interested with a "you are there" style of explaining the problems George Washington had setting up a new form of government as there was no instruction manual available.

Mr. Rich Rosenthal also presented us with a copy of the book, "Gone For A Soldier", about Jersey men in the Civil War.

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## Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date of the society will be Sunday May 15, at 2:00 PM in the Hanson House. This will be our annual Student Award meeting. Notices have gone out to the high Schools of Union County



narrative by Walter Boright about a reign of terror caused

afternoon, with the weather co-operating with a mostly

Inviting them to inform their senior students of the existence of these awards and of their possible participation in this program.

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### Pictures From Our Files

Here is a picture of the last house that was built for the Elizabeth "Own Your Home" program. It is shown here under construction on an empty lot on Trotters Lane, near Ursino Place in 1938.



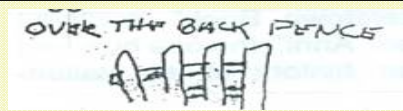
For several years this program had been an effort to stimulate development in various unused areas in the city. A new \$10,000 house would be erected and then furnished by participating businesses of Elizabeth.

During the period of construction lottery tickets were sold to cover the cost of the house and furnishings. When the work was finished, the public was invited to tour the house and examine the new, modern features all to be raffled off during the weeklong show.

With great publicity this show was held in the local armory, where each night a roomful of furnishing from the house was awarded to the lucky winner, who did not have to be present in order to win. On Saturday night, the last night of the show, the

house itself was raffled off.

Unfortunately, shortly after this show, the county prosecutor announced that the program was an illegal gambling operation, and the program was discontinued. However, scattered around the fringes of Elizabeth, there are still several houses built for this program. Most of them have achieved their purpose of stimulating the development of their area.



Paula Borenstein has been researching old houses and working with a committee in an effort to save them from destruction.

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Joanne Rajoppi has a new book about the Civil War that will be coming out soon. This is her second book about the home front during that war.

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Bill Frolich is still looking for an answer to that old question: How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

