



# UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## May Meeting

The meeting of May 15 was held as planned in the Hanson House. This was our annual high school student award meeting and this year four graduating students from Union County high schools received financial awards, as well as two books published by the Society concerning local history.

The awards were presented by Michael Yesenko, Chairman of the committee, with the help of Joanne Rajoppi.

selected by the committee on the basis of competitive essays submitted by several students from some of the local high schools.

After the presentation of the awards, an interesting slide show was given by Marybeth Lapham, of the Snyder Academy, which works to preserve old historic buildings and sites.

She described some of the work that has been done in and around the buildings and cemetery of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabeth.

## Next Meeting Date

Our next general meeting date will be September 11, 2016 at 2 PM at the Hanson House backyard. (weather permitting) This will be our annual picnic meeting and we hope for a pleasant day. If necessary the picnic will be held inside the house. A small amount of business will be quickly accomplished and then it will be Party Time.

Come out and enjoy the day!

On August 21 there will be a meeting of the Executive Board at 1:30 PM in the Hanson House to plan for future events.



The students were Sara Schatz of JEC Bruriah High School for Girls, Elizabeth, Steven Medina of Union High School, and Regina Arias, of Elizabeth High School,

Unfortunately, the fourth winner, a student who was from Westfield High School, Frankanthy Guerriero, was unable to attend. He will receive the award later.

These winners were



## Pictures From Our Files

Back in the 1970s our country was beginning to think about ways to celebrate the coming bicentennial of the United States, and Union County became very involved. Re-enactments of historic events took place throughout the county, and one of them concerned the beacons that had been set up to warn of any British military movement during the revolution. George Washington had ordered that a series of structures at least twenty feet tall should be set up on high ground with some easily ignited substance set on its top. One suggested device was a pyramid of logs.



At night a blazing fire atop a beacon could be seen by the watchers of other beacons who would then light their fire and so pass the word that something was happening. Cannon fire was also used to add sound to the warning.

It was decided that as part of the re-enactment of the Battle of Springfield of June 23, 1780, a beacon should be added, and arrangements were made to build a tower of logs in Bryant Park, at the border of Springfield and Summit. This was close to where an original beacon had been, but that site was not

available because of houses and other development.

County workers using heavy equipment moved in a number of logs near the edge of the lake in the park, and assembled a pyramid of logs, topped with a single branch.

The assembly of this tower of logs was completed by Friday afternoon, and all of the litter was cleaned up and the park made ready for the spectators of this rather unusual event.

The beacon was only a part of the celebration of the battle, as there was to be a large parade Saturday in the afternoon, and a reenactment of the battle on Meisel Field on Sunday.

Contrary to the original design, this beacon was to be burned to the ground, so a group of volunteers stuffed it with all the scrap wood that could be found, and guarded it while waiting for the time to ignite it.

That time was to be at 9:00 o'clock on Saturday night, after the parade in Springfield. There was some concern about the strong wind that was blowing and about its effect with any sparks from the fire, but a fire engine and crew were standing by, just in case.

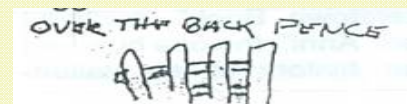
By 8 o'clock hundreds of

spectators had assembled in Bryant Park to watch the show. A p.a. system allowed them to hear the words of the several speakers about this event, and a crew of Lamb's Artillery were to signal the time to start the fire. At 9:00 o'clock the wind was still blowing hard, but this was the time.

A number of cannon fired into the night, and as though hit by that fire, the wind fell away to nothing. The wood in the beacon was ignited, and as the flames grew, all of the sparks fell within the pyramid.



The fire burned for two hours, and then, over the protests of the remaining spectators, the firemen put out the flames. By then, all that remained was an enormous pile of charcoal.



We still don't know about how much wood a woodchuck could chuck, and now we have another question. Who takes care of the caretaker's daughter when the caretaker is busy taking care?