

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AS
VEHICLES OF PRESERVATION: A
STUDY OF NEW JERSEY
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

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Degree and Year: Master of Arts in Historic Preservation,
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Thousands of local historical societies operate throughout the United States and often act as the first or only preservation-related organization with which the public interacts. The multiplicity of historical societies and their analogous missions create the potential for the promotion and practice of preservation to become significantly more wide-spread at a local level. Considering this potential, this treatise explores the efficacy of historical societies as vehicles of preservation of the historic built environment and the effect of their relationships with governmental history and historic preservation agencies on that efficacy.

Through an examination of the historical societies in New Jersey and the State's history and historic preservation agencies, this treatise research examines

the capacity and efforts of New Jersey historical societies in promoting and practicing preservation and explores the levels and types of support offered to historical societies by state governmental agencies. This study's major findings include the need for increased capacity among historical societies and the inequity of preservation-related funding distributed by New Jersey's history and historic preservation agencies due to a lack of connections between those agencies and historical societies, as well as a lack of professional capacity among societies to apply for and implement that funding.

Utilizing the information gathered in this treatise, I lay out a plan for improving the relationship between historical societies and state governmental agencies and for expanding historical societies' opportunities to lead local preservation. This study's recommendations include the development of diverse boards and programming by historical societies and the establishment of a Local History Services program in New Jersey like that of the Wisconsin Historical Society. With the implementation of progressive changes made concurrently by local and state level governmental agencies and by historical society organizations, I conclude that the preservation movement throughout New Jersey could develop into a powerful, unified force that strengthens and expands the singular heritage of the State.

Subject Headings:

Historical societies, historic built environment, historical society movement, historic preservation, local preservation efforts, state preservation agencies, New Jersey historical societies, New Jersey historic preservation, New Jersey preservation funding

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AS VEHICLES OF PRESERVATION:
A STUDY OF NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Goucher College in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in Historic Preservation
2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was substantially affected by the persistent encouragement of my best friend, Roland. His willingness to be engaged in my passion for preservation, to listen to my frustrations, to offer advice and to supply me with coffee helped me to not only finish this work, but to better it.

Additionally, I am appreciative of my thesis committee's patience and investment in my work. Their support, insight and critiques shaped my study into this final report and helped to keep me motivated along the way.

This work could not have been accomplished without the participation of numerous historical society representatives, as well as local, county and state preservation agency staff members. Their openness and willingness to take part in this determinative study prove that historical societies truly do have the potential to wield unprecedented influence over the preservation of New Jersey's historic built environment. I hope that this work is a catalyst for the establishment of a unified force of local historical societies and government preservation agencies throughout the state, and that through this revived preservation movement, the significance of preserving New Jersey's historic sites is understood and embraced by a wider audience.

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CHAPTER I.
BASTIONS OF PRESERVED HISTORY:
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AND PRESERVATION

Introduction

As an examination of the efficacy of historical societies as vehicles of preservation, this treatise explores the role of New Jersey historical societies in the state's historic preservation arena. As a historic preservationist living in New Jersey, I have personally noticed a disconnection between most local historical societies and preservation activity. This treatise is an attempt to discover and understand the underlying factors for this disconnection and to make recommendations to overcome it.

The resulting study was based upon available data and information on all discoverable historical societies in the state. The general relationships between these historical societies and state history and historic preservation agencies help to illuminate their current position in the state's preservation efforts. This treatise analyzes this research, addresses the missed opportunities for collaboration between local historical societies and state agencies and makes recommendations for the improvement of historical societies as active participants in historic preservation.

The beginning premise, therefore, of this treatise is that there is a disconnection between New Jersey historical societies and preservation activity which can and should be abated.

History Preserved with an Unparalleled Completeness

When the Massachusetts Historical Society was established in 1791 as the first historical society in the United States¹, educated Americans had long been familiar with the concept and actualization of historical societies from their establishment throughout Europe during the 18th century. However, more than a decade passed before the second historical society was established in New York.² And while some local historical societies in the Northeast may have been established early, the national historical society movement did not take off until the 1820s, nearly two decades after the founding of the New York Historical Society.

Between 1822 and 1904, forty-two state historical societies were established throughout the United States, including the New Jersey Historical Society in 1845. During that time, 50% of the county historical societies in New Jersey were also established, with the first county historical society established in Union County in 1869. In 1905, a respected publication on the work of American historical societies

1 “About the MHS,” *Massachusetts Historical Society*, <https://www.masshist.org/about>.

2 “About N-YHS,” *New-York Historical Society*, <http://www.nyhistory.org/about>.

gave the total number of societies throughout the nation as between 400-500.³ If most states had experienced similar development of county historical societies, that number of total nationwide societies suggests that the growth rate of local historical societies within New Jersey was at that time comparable to the rest of the nation.

By 1934, a comprehensive publication on state and local historical societies in the United States updated the number to nearly a thousand historical societies throughout the country.⁴ At that time, twenty-seven total historical societies were operating in New Jersey, including the State society, fourteen county societies and twelve local societies. This number again suggests that, if most states were developing societies at about the same rate as New Jersey, the state's development of historical societies was at that time parallel to the emerging national historical society movement. However, through the research accomplished on historical societies in New Jersey for this treatise, the twenty-seven societies established by 1934 represent just 7% of the 382 societies in the state today, with the majority of societies throughout the state established in the mid to late 20th century as a result of a convergence of new preservation laws and bicentennial celebrations at both the federal and state levels.

About 20% of the total number of historical societies within the State of New Jersey were founded between 1966 and 1976, marking the influence of two nationally significant events on the Historical society movement—the adoption of

3 Henry E. Bourne, *The Work of American Historical Societies* (Iowa: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1905), 6.

4 Julian P. Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies in the United States," *The American Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (1934).

the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 and the commemoration of the Bicentennial Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1976. The 1970 New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act was likely both a byproduct of these two nationally significant events and a catalyst for the growth of local historical societies within the state.

Extensive early publications describing the advent of historical societies in the United States provide a general understanding of their perceived role in American society. During the late 18th and early 19th century, Americans were called to task by Europeans who denounced the young country's lack of research libraries.⁵ While libraries throughout the country were amassing books and magazines, they were not actively collecting the letters, journals and family records which would illustrate American history. This facilitated the "realization that action was necessary to preserve historical records."⁶

In response, the emergent historical society movement spread nationally and included new institutions of greatly varied size, financial backing and long-term goals. However, most if not all shared a common objective, "to collect and diffuse the materials of American history."⁷ While having no real connection to each other, all historical societies within this early Movement acted in concert with one

5 Leslie Whittaker Dunlap, *American Historical Societies 1790-1860* (Madison, Wisconsin: 1944).

6 Ibid.

7 Henry A. Homes, "Historical Societies in the United States" in *Public libraries in the United States of America; their history, condition, and management. Special report, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education. Part I* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), 1.

another—each society strove to preserve the history of their own town, county, state or region, and therefore they worked together to preserve the history of the entire nation. This indirect outcome of the historical society movement was both understood and expressed by its leaders and supporters. As early as 1876, one stated that “it is probable that this [nation’s] history will be preserved with a completeness unparalleled in the annals of any people.”⁸

In addition to collecting and preserving unique historical records, early historical societies performed several other similar functions. Just as the members of the Historical society movement considered it an inherent duty of private owners of historical records to donate them to a public institution, they in turn expected those institutions, namely historical societies, to not only preserve them but interpret them in various ways and make them available to the public. Most historical societies saw the publication of those records as a necessary extension of their preservation, and one which gave “permanent value to the society’s volumes.”⁹

As many members of these early historical societies were interested in research and writing, the interpretation of those historical records was also integral to the society's functions. Societies published scholarly works of their members and supporters, especially those which utilized the society's own records. Public lectures on topics of local, regional or national history was another method employed by most historical societies to further their mission of disseminating history. Historical

8 Ibid.

9 J. F. Jameson, *The Functions of State and Local Historical Societies with Respect to Research and Publication* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 59.

society lectures were often well-attended, and their speakers were usually of prominent standing either locally or nationally.

Very early in the historical society movement of the 19th century, the American public seems to have become familiar with the extensive network of historical societies and accepting of their role in the collection, preservation and education of local and national history. In 1844, just fifty-three years after the establishment of the first historical society in the United States, President John Quincy Adams referred to historical societies as “the most useful institutions on earth.”¹⁰ These historical societies saw themselves as the long-term bastions of preserved history and as “more than a buoy” to the earlier problem of the loss of historical records to which they were the solution. They envisioned themselves “like a pier or projecting wharf, a landing place for the ships of time to unload some of their cargo before they pass into the ocean of obscurity.”¹¹

Other motivations pervaded the establishment of historical societies, including those of elitism and patriotism. Early historical societies were sometimes operated as private clubs, in which most members were men or elite persons of local society. These societies voted on membership, held closed meetings and discouraged outside use of their collections. Despite this stark opposition to the favorable open-policy historical societies, closed societies did still collect historical

10 *New York Daily Tribune* (New-York [N.Y.]), 21 Nov. 1844. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1844-11-21/ed-1/seq-1/>.

11 M. Burton Williamson, “The Value of a Historical Society,” in *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California Los Angeles* 3, no. 4 (California: University of California Press, 1896), 61.

records and perhaps viewed their restrictive operations as beneficial for their preservation.

In 1913, a speaker at a historical society meeting claimed that all historical societies “have been fostered by local pride and local patriotism.”¹² Because historical societies are founded to preserve the history of a town or larger area and consequently of the nation, it is natural that patriotism has been an underlying factor of the Historical society movement. Throughout the United States, there has been an identifiable connection between the establishment of historical societies and the celebration of local and national events. Many societies were also connected to patriotic groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, by members who participated in the founding or development of both the local DAR and the local historical society.

Early historical societies did not seem to focus their mission on the preservation of the built environment, likely due to a confluence of reasons. When the historical society movement began in the early to middle of the 19th century, there was less purposeful destruction of historic buildings. Before the 20th century, adaptive re-use of buildings was more common and there was more space for new construction throughout the United States. Additionally, separate preservation societies were being established with the primary mission of preserving either individual or groups of historic structures. Examples of early preservation societies include the 1853 Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, established to preserve the

12 Eugene Lyttle, “A Plea for the Closer Relationship of Historical Societies,” in *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 12 (New York: New York Historical Association, 1913), 78.

home of President George Washington and the 1889 Preservation Virginia organization, which is “dedicated to perpetuating and revitalizing Virginia's cultural, architectural and historic heritage.”¹³ Both organizations have been in continuous operation since their establishment, with one focusing solely on the preservation of one structure and its immediately surrounding landscape and one focusing on the preservation of the built environment of an entire state.

Though preserving historic structures was not a driving force of most early historical societies, its importance was not lost on their leaders and supporters. Many societies considered one of their functions to be the identification and marking of local landmarks such as “where the first meeting-house in town stood, or the first schoolhouse, or where the first settlers [...] built their cabins.”¹⁴ In 1913, a speaker at a historical society meeting referenced the work of historical societies to preserve “local records and local landmarks” as equally “valuable and essential.”¹⁵

Early publications of historical societies throughout the United States acknowledge this additional function of advocating for the preservation of local historic buildings. In 1905, a speaker detailing the functions of the Oregon Historical Society stated that the society's acts of “identifying historic sites and stimulating local communities to mark them and beautify them” is an “important

13 “About Us,” *Preservation Virginia*, <https://preservationvirginia.org/about>.

14 Otis G. Hammond, *Local Historical Societies and Their Field of Work* (New Hampshire: 1922), 3.

15 Eugene Lyttle, “A Plea for the Closer Relationship of Historical Societies,” in *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association* 12 (New York: New York Historical Association, 1913), 79.

service in rendering more hallowed [...] the land upon which a people dwells.” An 1899 publication of the Historical Society of Southern California urges preservation as the necessary work of historical societies so that “the future historian cannot complain of us that we scattered the landmarks and historical material intrusted [*sic*] to us, which we should have preserved and handed down to him.”¹⁶

In conjunction with their local preservation efforts, societies in the early historical society movement viewed their work as significant enough to be supported by all levels of government. As early as 1876, historical societies were “active in calling the attention of state legislators to measures for [...] preservation.”¹⁷ In 1925, a publication by the Florida Historical Society stated that the “society can accomplish much more than simply arouse interest in the preservation of historical data” but that they “should be able to influence the Florida legislators.”¹⁸

Other governmental involvement in early historical societies was of a pecuniary nature, such as an annual appropriation or a stipend for the publication of public records. This type of involvement continues today. Ten state historical societies in the United States operate as government agencies rather than non-profit

16 Walter R. Bacon, “Value of a Historical Society” in *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California and Pioneer Register, Los Angeles* 4, no. 3 (California: University of California, 1899), 242.

17 Henry A. Homes, “Historical Societies in the United States” in *Public libraries in the United States of America; their history, condition, and management. Special report, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education. Part I* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), 3.

18 James O. Knauss, “The Importance of Historical Societies” in *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (Florida: Florida Historical Society, 1925), 6.

organizations, and their missions to collect, preserve and promulgate history are therefore supported by the state government. Throughout New Jersey, many local historical societies are supported by town governments through small stipends or other means, such as being allowed to house the society's collections and hold their meetings in libraries and municipal buildings.

A Changing Landscape of History and Preservation

At the beginning of the 20th century, the historical society movement had spread to every state and nearly every county of the United States. All but four state historical societies were established before 1905, and two-thirds of the county historical societies in New Jersey were established by 1915. To date, all but three of twenty-one counties in the state are represented by a county historical society.

By 1906, 115 years after the establishment of the first historical society in the United States, the landscape of history and preservation had changed drastically. Rapid expansion throughout the country due to increased mobility and a rise in manufacturing, accompanied by an absence of federal preservation laws, led to an increase in threatened and destroyed historic sites. The dominant national preservation need shifted from that of written records to that of the built environment. That year, the Antiquities Act was adopted and gave power to the President of the United States to create protected National Monuments from any federally owned or controlled land.

Professional historians and preservationists changed during this time too. Armed with the new implementation of the Antiquities Act, they began to push for more comprehensive federal preservation laws. As leaders, members and supporters of historical societies, many lobbied the federal government as their representatives, and in so doing created the modern preservation movement on the foundation of the historical society movement. The 1916 creation of the National Park Service and the 1935 adoption of the Historic Sites Act were lauded by preservationists, historical societies and the American public. However, it was not until the 1960s that serious meetings were held to initiate the establishment of a comprehensive federal preservation law. Historian James Glass described the time as arising “in response to a swelling of popular concern and interest” in the preservation of historic structures throughout the nation.¹⁹

The interconnected relationship between historical societies, preservation and the government was evident in the planning process for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, when the National Park Service suggested that state historical societies serve as each state's “responsible agency” for participation in the National Register program.²⁰ Ultimately, government-run State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) were established in most states, but some, including Ohio and Wisconsin, chose to place the SHPO within the state historical society.

¹⁹ James Glass, *The Beginnings of a New National Historic Preservation Program 1957 to 1969* (Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1990), 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

The enactment of advanced federal preservation legislation helped spur a rebirth in the historical society movement. Approximately 80% of the local historical societies currently in New Jersey were founded after 1966. Statewide laws continued to foster the development of new local historical societies and of community-led preservation efforts. In 1970, New Jersey created its own Register of Historic Places Act, and in 1986, amended the Municipal Land Use Law to enable municipalities to include historic preservation elements within their master plans, to create historic preservation commissions and to enact historic preservation ordinances. In 1999, the New Jersey legislature passed the Garden State Preservation Trust Act, which provided annual funding for the acquisition and preservation of historic landscapes and structures until 2012. In 2016, the New Jersey legislature re-established a portion of that funding with the creation of the “Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Fund,” which is available to both non-profit organization and governmental entity applicants throughout the state. The passage and management of modern preservation legislation has continued to link historical societies and government in a meandering mission to preserve the built environment.

Because early historical societies were founded to preserve the history of a town or region, and because their leaders and members actively advocated for that preservation, it is natural to assume they would also have been supporters of the later move “to preserve the total cultural heritage of a community” via the modern

preservation movement.²¹ While most historical societies today continue their original functions of collecting, preserving and publishing historic records and holding public lectures, one question of this treatise is whether they have evolved to meet the changing demands of preservation or remained much as they were two hundred years ago.

In 1979, a publication of the Georgia Historical Society stated that “the historic preservation movement depends on support at the local level for its success.”²² While preservationists agree that the active participation of local organizations, government and individuals in the protection and preservation of the built environment is integral not only to its success but to its very presence, the history of the historical society and preservation movements prove that they have been fundamental to one another. Therefore, this treatise also examines the role of government in New Jersey at the state, county and local levels in supporting historical societies’ preservation efforts.

Utilizing the historical societies of New Jersey as a primary example, this treatise will hopefully prove to be the foundation of an imperative national inquiry into the efficacy of historical societies as vehicles of preservation.

21 Lyn Waskiewicz, “The Role of the Historical Society in Historic Preservation” in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (Georgia: Georgia Historical Society, 1979), 60.

22 Ibid.

New Jersey Historical Societies

The almost codependent but blurred relationship between historical societies and preservation has continued to this day, with the exact nature of the role of modern historical societies undefined by either field. This treatise focuses on historical societies which identify themselves with a locality such as a town or county and whose mission statements reflect a desire to preserve the history of that area through some means. To date, there are 382 such historical societies in New Jersey, although some of these societies are currently inactive.

This study utilizes a stratified sample of these historical societies to form observable trends throughout the state. Of the eighteen county historical societies in New Jersey, five are included in this study. Sixteen local historical societies throughout the state are also included.

A list of all known historical societies within the state was categorized by the age of each society and by the population of the locality it represents. The twenty-one societies included in this study were chosen from varied ranges within those divisions. These societies represent founding dates ranging from 1884 to 2015 and locality populations ranging from less than 3,000 to over 575,000. Additional variations within the selected societies include median income of the locality represented by the society, level of activity and size of annual budget. The organizations studied illuminate general trends within New Jersey's historical societies.

For this study, I interviewed representatives from the chosen societies with the same base set of questions intended to determine the organization's role in local preservation and its relationship with local and state government regarding its advocacy of and action in the preservation of the built environment. Information gathered included totals of preservation funding appropriated by the society itself or awarded to the society, the amount of preservation work accomplished, the levels of preservation-field knowledge and education of the society's staff and trustees and the awareness of local preservation needs or projects.

To accurately assess the efficacy of historical societies as vehicles of preservation, this study also included research into the interactions with historical societies of local, county and state governmental agencies which participate in preservation in some way. This treatise analyzes the level of support available to local historical societies by these agencies whose missions are to promote preservation throughout a specific area or the entire state.

This study has been completed through an examination of the websites, annual reports, brochures and other publications of each selected historical society to discover links to preservation-related missions, activities, programs or promotions, and through a search of newspaper archives for evidence of the societies' involvement in local preservation efforts.

Based on the analysis of this information, this treatise will make recommendations to both historical societies and government agencies for improving and strengthening the relationship between historical societies and preservation.

Learning from New Jersey

In the second chapter, the historical societies included in this study are examined and general patterns of societies throughout the state are revealed. Societies which practice preservation of the historic built environment are contrasted with those which do not. This study evaluates the causes and effects of both approaches. The third chapter examines the relationship between these societies and government agencies at the local, county and state levels. Key connections between them are analyzed, as are the absence of those connections.

In the fourth and final chapter, the results of the study of historical societies are discussed and specific recommendations are outlined for both historical societies and government agencies to bring about a more unified and productive approach to preservation of the built environment in New Jersey.

CHAPTER II. TO DISCOVER, PROCURE AND PRESERVE: NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Expansion of the Historical Society Movement

In 1845, the New Jersey Historical Society was established in Trenton as a statewide organization with a mission to “discover, procure and preserve [...] the history of New Jersey.”²³ Shortly after its founding, the society became headquartered in Newark, where it remains today. It was the first historical society in New Jersey and the sixteenth state historical society in the nation.

Nearly twenty years later, in 1864, the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society (VHAS) was established as the second historical society in New Jersey. A convergence of particular factors within Vineland led to the VHAS being established earlier than any of the state’s county historical societies and fifty years before another municipality-based historical society.

Vineland began as a planned community created in 1861 by land developer and idealist Charles K. Landis, who resided in the town and personally guided its

23 Don C. Skemer, “The New Jersey Historical Society,” *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science: Volume 39 – Supplement 4* (CRC Press, 1985), <https://books.google.com/books?id=gr4COx1IpwMC&lpg>.

early development. By fostering the expansion of culture, diversity and productivity, Landis' Vineland became both an agricultural hub and an internationally-recognized community of intellectualism and innovation.

The town's early inhabitants were mostly former residents of New England, where the national historical society movement had begun at the beginning of the 19th century. Armed with the awareness of this movement, and with a grandiose view of the significance of the Vineland experiment, a group of Vinelanders formed the VHAS just three years after the creation of the community itself. In 1910, with only eleven other historical societies in existence within the state, the VHAS built its permanent home, a large brick structure constructed as a museum and society headquarters. The building has been in continuous use for its original purpose and is the oldest purposefully-built historical society museum in New Jersey.

Before the passage of the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act, which created the National Park Service within the Department of Interior, only fifteen historical societies were established throughout New Jersey, including the state historical society, twelve county societies and two local societies. During the 20th century, the historical society movement in New Jersey experienced its largest expansion, with over 50% of all historical societies in the state established between 1916 and 1977. The height of development occurred between 1966 and 1977, when over 30% of the total number of historical societies were established within an eleven-year period. This remarkable growth was due primarily to three major events which took place during that time within the state and the nation.

In 1966, federal preservation legislation reached a zenith with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which created the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation and Section 106, all invaluable tools in modern preservation efforts. In 1970, the State of New Jersey followed suit by passing the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act, which created a statewide Register with similar language and direction as the National Register, but with additional power granted to New Jersey's Historic Sites Council to review and either approve or reject applications for local, county or state governmental undertakings that may adversely affect listed historic resources. The NRHP is mostly honorary, while the New Jersey Register of Historic Places (NJRHP), with the addition of the Historic Sites Council, is a much stronger preservation tool. Finally, in 1976, the United States Bicentennial was celebrated throughout the nation, and it involved organized displays of local patriotism, such as the establishment of historical societies. These three events played a key role in the New Jersey historical society movement, while the NHPA and the Bicentennial likely prompted similar historical society growth in other states.

Since 1978, the establishment of new historical societies within the state has continued at a steady rate, with about 12% of the total number of societies being added each decade. To date, there are nearly 400 historical societies in New Jersey dedicated to preserving the history of a locality. However, the research conducted for this study suggests that approximately 25% of the societies within the state are either completely inactive or barely active.

Interest and involvement in historical societies is present throughout the state. Eighteen of the twenty-one counties within the state have county historical societies. Local societies are established in all twenty-one counties, ranging from as few as six societies in Salem County to as many as thirty-seven societies in Bergen County. The concentration of historical societies throughout New Jersey is illustrated in Figure 1.

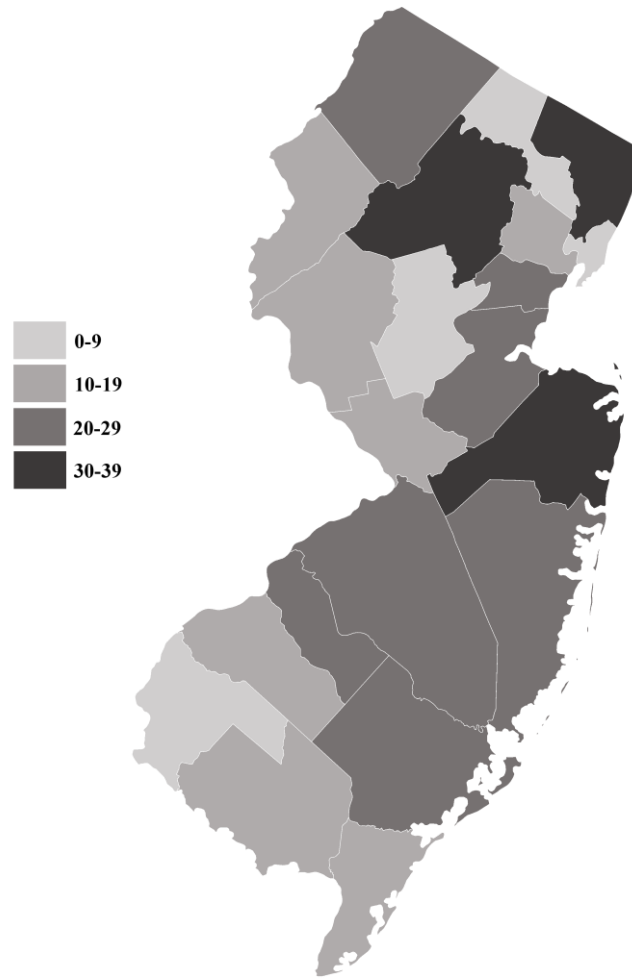


Figure 1: Concentration of historical societies across the State of New Jersey.

While Salem and Bergen counties are similar in size, at 332 square miles and 247 square miles respectively, their population sizes are diametrically opposed. Salem is the least populous county in New Jersey (64,436) and Bergen is the most populous (938,506), which seems to explain the disparate numbers of historical societies within the two counties, with six societies in Salem County and thirty-seven in Bergen County. However, there is not a strong correlation between county population and number of historical societies within a county throughout the rest of the state. For example, Hudson County holds the fourth largest population but is the twentieth in its total historical societies, just above Salem County; while Atlantic County's population ranks fifteenth, but its number of societies ranks fifth.

To Collect and Preserve History: General Trends

To illuminate general trends within New Jersey historical societies, twenty-one historical societies were chosen for inclusion in this study (see Table 1). These societies represent a stratified sampling of the totality of societies within the state, which were organized by three key data points: age of society, population of locality and median income of locality. By studying societies which fall into wide ranges in all three of these categories, a generalized picture forms of the current relationship between New Jersey historical societies and the actual preservation of the state's historic built environment.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY	ESTABLISHED	MEDIAN INCOME	POPULATION
Salem County Historical Society	1884	\$ 61,831	63,436
Sussex County Historical Society	1904	\$ 86,565	142,522
Atlantic County Historical Society	1913	\$ 54,461	270,991
Cranford Historical Society	1927	\$ 115,201	24,097
Historical Society of Princeton	1938	\$ 114,645	31,249
Ocean County Historical Society	1950	\$ 61,994	592,497
Washington Township Historical Society	1960	\$ 124,177	18,695
Chester Historical Society	1969	\$ 154,094	7,921
Califon Historic Society	1970	\$ 76,657	1,060
Long Beach Island Historical Association	1976	\$ 48,697	8,556
Greate Egg Harbour Township Historical Society	1979	\$ 74,409	43,504
Mauricetown Historical Society	1983	\$ 58,036	162
Galloway Township Historical Society	1987	\$ 61,530	36,753
Tewksbury Township Historical Society	1989	\$ 165,552	5,833
Historical Society of Winslow Township	1993	\$ 72,934	39,328
Pohatcong History and Heritage Society	2002	\$ 44,537	14,455
Harmony Township Historical Society	2004	\$ 81,146	2,667
Hudson County Genealogical and Historical Society	2007	\$ 59,741	677,983
Greater Elmer Area Historical Society	2010	\$ 70,625	1,327
Sussex-Wantage Historical Society	2013	\$ 87,300	10,998
Blairstown Museum	2015	\$ 84,717	5,793

Table 1: List of historical societies included in study organized by date of establishment.

Representatives of each of the twenty-one societies were interviewed for this study using the same set of questions regarding the society’s daily operation, its interaction with local and state preservation entities and agencies, and its self-described role in local preservation. While all but three societies own or lease a building from which they operate an office, library and/or museum, only three societies have any paid staff. All twenty-one societies rely heavily on volunteer support to develop and implement programs, events, marketing campaigns, collaborations with other organizations and community outreach, though the number of volunteers in each society ranges from a handful to hundreds.

All but the largest few of the twenty-one societies in this study expressed concern for their perpetuation. Of the societies in this study, 80% listed more

volunteers and members as one of their organization's primary needs, while 40% specifically stated that their primary need is younger members.

However, 65% of the societies have a board of trustees with an average age of over sixty. Only one society in this study has a board member younger than thirty. With a board and a volunteer base made up almost exclusively of older persons, a historical society may not be able to attract younger members to its organization. Most of the twenty-one societies listed house tours, teas and lectures as their recurring annual events. An article published by the American Alliance of Museums suggests these types of events will not appeal in general to a younger audience, and that to do so, museums must "find a way to become more engaging, personalized and entertaining."²⁴ Without an injection of younger board members and/or an inclusion of programs and events that appeal to younger people, these societies are unlikely to attract a younger audience or acquire younger volunteers.

Of the twenty-one societies, all but one explicitly include the word "preservation" in their mission statements. Many historical societies explain the basic purpose of their organization in a similar way. The Tewksbury Township Historical Society states that it was "organized exclusively to further research into and for the preservation and dissemination of the history of the Township."²⁵ The

24 Michael Cannall, "The Millennial Museum," American Alliance of Museums, <http://labs.aam-us.org/buildingculturalaudiences/the-millennial-museum>.

25 "History of the Society," *Tewksbury Historical Society*, <http://www.tewksburyhistory.net>.

Atlantic County Historical Society states simply that its mission is to “collect and preserve the history of Atlantic County and southern New Jersey.”²⁶

A few of these societies do have mission statements with more clearly defined ideas of preservation and their role within it. The Califon Historic Society states that its mission is to “preserve and protect the town of Califon’s unique cultural, architectural and industrial history, preserve and share the area’s rich history [...] and encourage preservation and restoration of historic landmarks in the town.”²⁷ The Mauricetown Historical Society explained that its mission is to preserve and protect the historic fabric of the town, with preservation of the built environment as one of its main objectives.²⁸

The Princeton Historical Society (PHS) is the only society in this study which does not use preservation in its mission statement. Instead, it states that its mission is to “develop signature programs of learning and discovery to connect the lessons of the past to the issues which inform our future” and to “celebrate a love of place.”²⁹ During this study, the PHS representative interviewed described the society’s role in the preservation of the built environment as one of attempting to foster preservation advocates from within the community, rather than actively

26 “About Us,” *Atlantic County Historical Society*, <http://www.atlanticcountyhistoricalsocietynj.org/about-us.php>.

27 “Mission Statement,” *Califon Historic Society*, <http://www.califonhistoricsociety.org/about>.

28 Julie Gandy (President, Mauricetown Historical Society) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

29 “Our Story,” *Historical Society of Princeton*, <https://princetonhistory.org/about-us/our-story>.

advocating for or practicing preservation itself.³⁰ The society’s website does state that the organization “supports active preservation campaigns by providing educational and historical resources to community preservation efforts.”³¹ Of the societies included in this study, the PHS has by far the largest budget and the most paid staff, suggesting that neither of those factors is determinative of preservation practice.

Two statewide organizations in New Jersey are in varied ways involved in statewide preservation and are therefore connected to both local historical societies and state preservation agencies—the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (LHSNJ) and Preservation New Jersey (PNJ). LHSNJ is a non-profit organization founded in 1966 to create a network of historical societies, museums, preservation organizations and archival repositories throughout the state. It acts as a union of historical societies in the state and its website states part of its mission is to “conduct cooperative activities to advance preservation and knowledge of the history of New Jersey.”³² However, it has no designated preservation committee and offers few resources on its website for historical societies to develop their own preservation efforts. The LHSNJ holds three meetings each year in different

30 Izzy Kasdin (Director, Princeton Historical Society) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

31 “Our Story,” *Historical Society of Princeton*, <https://princetonhistory.org/about-us/our-story>.

32 “League of Historical Societies of New Jersey,” *League of Historical Societies of New Jersey*, <http://www.lhsnj.org>.

locations across the state, where members exchange administrative and programming ideas.

PNJ is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 to “advocate for and promote historic preservation as a sustainable strategy to protect and enhance the vitality and heritage of New Jersey’s richly diverse communities.”³³ While PNJ is the leading preservation advocacy group in the state, it does not offer direct support to the development of historical societies. Its primary program is an annual list of the top ten most endangered historic structures in New Jersey, for which it spreads awareness of their preservation needs and opportunities. However, its website offers no resources for historical societies who seek information on becoming more involved in local preservation.

Financial Impediments to Preservation

Over 40% of the twenty-one societies operate with an annual budget of less than \$10,000, while about 25% have an annual budget of more than \$50,000. The societies with budgets of less than \$10,000 range in age from four to forty-eight years, while the societies with budgets of more than \$50,000 range in age from 28 to 133 years. This shows that in general there is a correlation between the age of a

33 “About Us,” *Preservation New Jersey*,
<https://www.preservationnj.org/about/about-us>.

society and its budget, likely because older societies are more experienced in fundraising and/or grant-writing.

The total budgetary appropriation for the twenty-one societies reaches just over one million dollars. By factoring in an inactivity rate of about 25% of the 382 known historical societies in New Jersey, this suggests that historical societies within the state total together approximately \$13.5 million dollars in annual operating budgets.³⁴ The total amount spent by historical societies on preservation-related activities is not known to this study.

One-third of the societies in this study indicated that they do not typically apply for any grants. Four societies stated that they apply only for occasional project grants, while nearly 50% of the societies stated that they routinely apply for operating and project grants. The three societies in this study which do have paid staff each receive annual grant-funded operating support at a county and/or state level. Of the eleven societies which neither apply for nor receive operating support, all of them expressed concern that their organizations were either ineligible to receive the grant funding or unable to produce the grant applications due to a lack of knowledge regarding available grants and their requirements and/or a lack of capability or experience in writing grant applications.

34 If approximately 25% of the 382 societies in the state are inactive with no budgets, then approximately 287 societies do have budgets. Because the twenty-one societies in this study are a stratified sample of the total number of societies throughout the state, the total budget of the twenty-one societies (approximately one million dollars) can be multiplied by the number of times twenty-one goes into 287 (thirteen and a half) to estimate the total budget of all historical societies in the state.

During the interviews for this study, representatives for each of the twenty-one societies equated the significance of preserving written records and artifacts with that of preserving the built environment of their community, while just six of the societies are actively engaged in doing so in some way. An additional six societies indicated that they either have no interest or not enough knowledge to pursue preservation of the built environment in any way. Of the three societies in this study with annual budgets over \$100,000, two are part of the group with no interest in the practice of preservation. One society stated that involvement in attempts to save historic structures from neglect or demolition is too political an activity for the organization. Nearly 60% of the societies stated that they would begin or increase their preservation efforts if they were financially able to do so.

A Collaborative Dialogue for Local Preservation

The societies in this study actively engaged in the preservation of the built environment vary in efficacy based not only on the availability of funding, but also the presence or absence of preservation ordinances, historic preservation commissions and support for their endeavors at the municipal level. The preservation and protection of historic structures within a community is typically most significant to those within that community. The most effective preservation efforts therefore have the support of not only local residents and groups, but of the local government.

Nearly 60% of the twenty-one societies are located in a municipality with a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Five of the six societies practicing preservation are in municipalities with an HPC, while four of the six societies disinterested in preservation are in municipalities with an HPC. Based on this study, the relationships between historical societies and preservation commissions within the same municipality, and the impact of their joint operation on the societies' level of preservation engagement, seems to be dictated entirely by the individuals involved in the corresponding organizations, rather than on any set of identifiable markers.

When the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) was amended in 1986 to enable the creation of local historic preservation commissions, mandates were included regarding the types of persons who could be appointed to serve on these commissions and their responsibilities within the local government. There must be at least one member who is “knowledgeable in building design and construction or architectural history” and at least one who is “knowledgeable or with a demonstrated interest in local history.”³⁵ The MLUL empowers the group to prepare a historic resource inventory, advise the planning board and “carry out other advisory, educational and informational functions as will promote historic preservation in the municipality.”³⁶

35 “Municipal Land Use Law,” *NJ Historic Preservation Office*, nj.gov/dep/hpo/3preserve/mlul_02_2017.pdf.

36 Ibid.

Historic preservation commissions are by law and historical societies are by essence purposed to preserve the history of the community in which they operate. Because HPCs have the potential to effect change within the local government in a way that societies usually cannot, and societies are able to raise funds and community support in a way commissions cannot, the success of the preservation movement within any community would be greatly strengthened by a synergistic approach of these two groups.

In 1999, the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO) issued a directory of the known historic preservation commissions throughout the state, which at that time totaled 165. The directory has not been updated by the NJHPO since then, so it is likely that the number has somewhat grown. However, there are more than twice as many historical societies within the state, each operating within a separate municipality or county controlled by a local government. Most of the societies in this study indicated that the promotion and practice of preservation was more of the responsibility of the local government than the society, which directly correlates to the high percentage of societies without preservation-related knowledge. Using that perception generally for historical societies throughout the state, municipalities without an HPC are at an exponentially greater risk of losing historic environments than municipalities without a historical society.

Ideally, in the absence of a historic preservation commission, members of a local historical society would implore the municipality to create one, while similarly in the absence of a historical society, members of a local preservation commission would seek the support of the community to establish one. Several societies in this

study depicted a good relationship between the society and the local HPC, with the societies offering research assistance, historic property advice, or having cross-over members serving on both the society's board of trustees and the HPC.

The President and the Vice-President of the Califon Historic Society are both members of the Califon Historic Preservation Commission. As previously mentioned, the Califon Historic Society's mission explicitly states that it will strive to "encourage preservation and restoration of historic landmarks in the town."³⁷ The society maintains several historic properties within the town, some of which are owned by the town and leased to the society. Because members of the municipal preservation commission are intimately involved with the local historical society, their preservation efforts are magnified. The society is actively seeking out abandoned or threatened historic structures, and with the help of the municipality, preserving them.

In 1991, Harmony Township created a historic preservation commission, which immediately began surveying the township and compiling information on its historic properties. During that process, the HPC discovered a vacant historic farmhouse on a piece of land purchased by the State and negotiated for it to be leased to the Township. Members of the HPC then established the Harmony Township Historical Society, which raised funds for the property's restoration and now utilizes the property as a museum. The efforts of the society and the HPC continue to remain closely intertwined and they share a vision for continuing to

37 "Mission Statement," *Califon Historic Society*, <http://www.califonhistoricsociety.org/about>.

identify other areas or buildings of historic interest which could lead to additional preservation projects.

However, not all historical societies and historic preservation commissions work so well together, especially as there are no state-mandated guidelines that commissions must follow regarding their collaboration with other local historic or preservation organizations. The Chester Historical Society, whose mission statement includes the encouragement of the “preservation and protection of buildings, monuments, and sites of present or potential historical value” to its community, is currently at odds with Chester’s historic preservation commission.³⁸ The HPC approved demolition of an 1873 historic house which the society has been attempting to save from demolition and encroaching development. The owner of the property is currently suing the municipality to allow for the removal of several historic structures and the construction of affordable housing, a bank and a retail store on the site.³⁹

For some time, the municipality refused to divulge any information to the society regarding the status of the historic house but has since responded to the society’s Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests. However, without the financial ability to hire lawyers to represent the society’s interest in ensuring the municipality does not grant demolition permits, the society can do little but gather community support for its cause. The society is championing other successful cases

38 “Constitution,” *Chester Historical Society*, <http://www.historicchesternj.com/home/constitutionandbylaws.html>.

39 Edward Ng (President, Chester Historical Society) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

of adaptive re-use of historic buildings within Chester in its endeavors to convince the local government of the benefits of preserving the house. However, with the local historic preservation commission not on its side, the historical society's preservation efforts in this situation are currently ineffectual.⁴⁰

Municipalities without historic preservation commissions often offer little to no support for historic preservation, even when they have a relationship with the local historical society, such as leasing the society a municipally-owned building or providing the society with exhibit space within a municipal building. The Galloway Township Historical Society is both a non-profit organization and an official agency of Galloway Township, as adopted in a 1987 township ordinance. The Township does not have an HPC and the society has had no effect on the township's demolition of historic structures. The society is currently attempting to preserve a pre-1800 house situated on land owned by the State and slated for demolition and has neither the funds nor the support of the local government to be successful.⁴¹

Municipalities sometimes view preservation efforts of historical societies as a disruption to their development or ongoing operation. Without an HPC to internally support a cooperative relationship between the municipality and local historical society, a society attempting to practice preservation can be met with antagonism at the municipal level.

40 Ibid.

41 Sarah Snow (Librarian, Galloway Township Historical Society) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

The Blirstown Museum is the youngest organization in this study and the only one without “historical society” in its name. It operates as a historical society in a town with no other historical society and is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Blirstown’s history. The Museum has developed and offers many programs and events, including a Little Free Library available on its historic property, a bi-monthly open mic night where anyone can perform (poetry, dance, etc.) and a collaborative series of events with local artists. The Museum conducts extensive research on large, successful museums and attempts to replicate some of their programming on a smaller scale.⁴²

The Blirstown Museum is in the process of achieving 501(c)(3) status, and once it does, plans to begin fundraising for preservation projects. One of its primary goals is to create a program wherein the Museum identifies historic buildings in need of rehabilitation, engages in a collaborative dialogue with the property owners, and raises the funds needed for the property owner to rehabilitate the building according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. In this way, the organization helps to preserve the built environment of the community without taking ownership and maintaining responsibility for numerous historic structures.⁴³

Blirstown does not have an official HPC, but does have a Historic Preservation Committee, comprised of up to twenty-five members who advise the Township regarding its historic preservation needs. Because the Committee was not

42 Jeannette Iurato (Curator, Blirstown Museum) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

43 Ibid.

formed as an official HPC under the MLUL requirements, it has no legal power within the Township government aside from providing advice which may be accepted or rejected. Unfortunately, the Blairstown Museum has not yet been successful in creating a working relationship with the Committee.

Because of the increased risk to the historic built environment in municipalities without historic preservation commissions, historical societies which do not lobby for creation of an HPC are not working for their own organization's self-interests. The Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society, which was previously mentioned as the second historical society established in the State of New Jersey, is not involved in the promotion of preservation within the community, which also has no municipal HPC. The oldest society in this study, the Salem County Historical Society, stated that they have no relationship with the Salem Historic Preservation Commission, nor do they actively engage in preservation of the built environment of Salem County.⁴⁴ This suggests that the establishment and operation of an HPC within a municipality is not affected by the age of a historical society operating there.

⁴⁴ Richard Guido (Administrative Librarian, Salem County Historical Society) in discussion with the author, August 2016.

Engaging in Preservation

Less than 30% of the twenty-one societies are currently engaged in some kind of preservation work of their community's historic built environment. This work includes rehabilitating multiple historic properties, actively advocating for the preservation of specific endangered structures and/or actively promoting the practice of preservation of the built environment within the local community and municipal government. While many societies operate within a historic building, most do not attempt to influence the surrounding historic landscape.

One of the simplest ways to recognize the significance of a historic structure within the state may be to nominate it for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the New Jersey Register of Historic Places (NJRHP) or a local historic register. While inclusion in any register does not grant total immunity from destruction or development, it does “provide a degree of review and protection from public encroachment.”⁴⁵ Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to “take into account the effects of their undertakings” on properties listed or eligible to be listed in the NRHP⁴⁶, while the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act requires state, county and local agencies to perform similar reviews on properties listed in the NJRHP. Several societies in this study indicated that they have been contacted by the NJHPO at least once to

45 “New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places,” *NJ Historic Preservation Office*, <http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/1identify/nrsr.htm>.

46 “Section 106 Regulations Summary,” *Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*, <http://www.achp.gov/106summary.html>.

participate in an encroachment review of a historic structure within their community.

By routinely working to list significant historic structures, societies would at the least ensure that government-funded development projects are first reviewed for potential damage to any listed historic resources. This level of preservation work does not require societies to own or maintain additional buildings, which most societies are not financially able to do and which is the primary reason given by societies when asked why they are not actively engaged in preservation of the built environment.

Four societies in this study prepared nominations in the past which were rejected. Three societies contributed to successful nomination applications by compiling information and research. Eleven other societies stated they have never worked on a nomination. This study illuminates several underlying factors for this lack of involvement with nomination applications by historical societies— inadequate awareness among societies regarding the significance of listing sites, lack of capacity to independently complete and submit a nomination for either the NRHP or NJRHP, or a lack of information of available grants which provide funding for hiring consultants to complete nominations.

One of the societies actively pursuing preservation, the Sussex County Historical Society (SCHS), operates the second oldest purpose-built historical society museum in New Jersey. The society has its own Historic Preservation Committee, which for ten years has been tasked with documenting the exteriors and interiors of historic structures throughout Sussex County, especially those which are

abandoned or threatened with demolition. Committee members have advocated on behalf of many threatened historic buildings, some of which were later demolished, but some of which were preserved. They have also worked to stabilize historic buildings and turn them over to other organizations to allow them to finalize the restoration and adaptively re-use the building.⁴⁷

Because of the society's recent advocacy efforts, two historic buildings threatened with demolition were donated to the SCHS this year. The society plans to rehabilitate the buildings, an 1802 public school building and an 1888 house, according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and to eventually utilize them as expansions of their current museum, storage and office space. Although the rehabilitation of these two buildings will keep the society busy for some time, the SCHS representative interviewed stated that the society would continue to advocate for the preservation of other endangered structures and would become personally invested in the preservation of additional buildings in desperate situations.

To accomplish its objectives of preservation advocacy and practice, the SCHS acknowledged the need to often apply pressure to both local politicians and local press.⁴⁸ The society, which is headquartered in Newton, also has strong connections to the local and county government. In 1988, the society's Board President, Wayne McCabe, helped create the Newton Historic Preservation

⁴⁷ Wayne McCabe (President, Sussex County Historical Society) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Commission and served as its chairman for several years. Since 2004, McCabe has also served as the official Sussex County Historian. McCabe's professional experience as a Land Use Planner and Preservation Consultant have been instrumental to the efficacy of the SCHS' preservation work.

As the leader of a county society established in 1904, McCabe suggests, while county historical societies may be generally or initially more successful than local historical societies, that local societies are inherently more effective at driving preservation work within their own municipalities. To that end, the SCHS created a committee called the Sussex County History Alliance, with the purpose of supporting local societies in Sussex County through workshops, meetings and shared community outreach. One of McCabe's strongest recommendations is for historical societies to diversify their boards with professional historians, preservationists, architects, attorneys and accountants.⁴⁹

The increased efficacy of preservation work by a historical society when its board includes at least one professional preservationist is also demonstrated by another of the six societies in this study actively engaged in preservation. In 2003, the Pohatcong History and Heritage Society (PHHS) was established by Michael Marguiles, an architect specializing in historic preservation and a member of Preservation New Jersey's board of directors. Marguiles is also a member of the Pohatcong Township Historic Preservation Commission. Through his experience, he has discovered the compounded effect that a historical society and an HPC may have on local preservation of the built environment. He recommends that, wherever

49 Ibid.

only one exists in a municipality, the organization or commission work to create the other.⁵⁰

The PHHS is currently rehabilitating an 1850 mansion which was donated to the society two years ago. It plans to use the building as a living historic resource rather than exclusively as a traditional historic house museum. Once the rehabilitation is complete, the society will utilize one room inside the mansion for exhibits regarding Pohatcong's history, while the rest of the building will be a community facility and center for the arts. Adaptive re-use of historic buildings is a critical component of the modern preservation movement, and one which historical societies in general have not yet seemed to embrace.

Improving Capacity and Collaborations

Based on the preservation efforts of the twenty-one societies analyzed in this study, wherein close to 30% of the societies are currently engaged in preservation work, and by factoring in an inactivity rate of about 25% of the total number of historical societies throughout the state, it can be surmised that fewer than 100 societies in New Jersey actively advocate for or practice preservation of their community's historic built environment. This study finds that the main causes for this deficit are a lack of knowledge among society board members and volunteers,

⁵⁰ Mike Marguiles (President, Pohatcong History and Heritage Society) in discussion with the author, September 2017.

lack of funding and/or fundraising ability and a lack of support at the municipal, county and state levels. Additionally, some effective steps toward improving preservation of the built community, such as working in conjunction with a local HPC and supporting the recognition of more properties through NRHP and NJRHP nominations, are not being undertaken regularly by historical societies throughout the state.

The weaknesses in historical societies throughout New Jersey as vehicles of preservation of the built environment can be summarized by a general lack of capacity. Unfortunately, it can be a persistent cycle—societies with adequate funding are more likely to be professionally staffed, and societies with staff are likely to be more capable at fundraising. Many societies require external intervention to improve their capacity enough to become self-sustaining.

To further understand the ineffectuality of historical societies on the modern preservation movement, the relationship between these societies and governmental agencies charged with supporting historic preservation is analyzed in the subsequent chapter. What do societies need to be more effective vehicles of local preservation? How can state preservation agencies and statewide preservation organizations contribute to those needs? If these questions can be answered, it might be possible for New Jersey historical societies to help usher in a new preservation movement within the state and create a resurgence in the preservation of the state's historic resources.

CHAPTER III.
ADVANCING AWARENESS OF NEW JERSEY’S PAST:
CONNECTIONS AMONG HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AND
GOVERNMENT

The Governmental Entities Managing Preservation in New Jersey

Throughout New Jersey, specific governmental entities at all levels are tasked with advocating for and practicing preservation of the state’s historic built environment. None of these entities existed before the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and therefore statewide preservation efforts up to that point were led by historical societies and private individuals. In his book detailing the history of the beginnings of federal involvement in preservation, historian James Glass states that there was “a strong public identification in 1966 of historic preservation with the work of historical societies.”⁵¹

By 1966, nearly 30% of the total number of historical societies in New Jersey were established, including seventeen of the eighteen county historical societies. The adoption of the NHPA contributed not only to a rise in the development of historical societies throughout the state, but also to the

⁵¹ James Glass, *The Beginnings of a New National Historic Preservation Program 1957to 1969* (Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1990), 23.

establishment of the three governmental agencies currently managing history and historic preservation efforts at the statewide level—the New Jersey Historical Commission, the New Jersey Historic Trust and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office.

Soon after the adoption of the NHPA, initial preservation legislation in New Jersey was hastily enacted to secure the state’s role in the emerging national preservation movement. From the late 1960s to the late 1970s, several preservation-related entities were established by law in New Jersey and their capacities and locations within the state’s various departments changed several times. This led to the modern delineation of history and historic preservation responsibilities being divided between the three aforementioned agencies and created a complicated and often confusing web of interconnected agencies and boards managing historic preservation at the state level.

In its 1997 report, the Task Force on New Jersey History noted this fragmentation within the state’s governmental preservation programs and policies. The report states that, “after considerable study and debate,” the Task Force found that New Jersey “lags behind other states” in the way it divides and operates its preservation-related responsibilities. It recommended the establishment of a “cabinet-level department in New Jersey to centralize historical services and to include other related services such as natural resources and/or cultural resources.”⁵²

⁵² Task Force on New Jersey History, *A Heritage Reclaimed: Report of the Task Force on New Jersey History June 1997*, <http://hdl.handle.net/10929/24562>.

To date, this recommendation has not been followed and would likely require legislative approval.

The New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) was established in 1967 as a division of the Department of State. The NJHC is governed by seventeen members, ten of which are private citizens who are experts in New Jersey history and who represent geographically diverse regions of the state. Four are members of the New Jersey Legislature and the remaining three are the Secretary of the State, the State Librarian and a representative from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. The NJHC’s website states that its mission is to “enrich the lives of the public by preserving the historical record and advancing interest in and awareness of New Jersey's past.”⁵³

The 1967 statute creating the NJHC outlined its purpose as that of an advisor to both public and private agencies within the state on the history of New Jersey and the preservation of its historic sites, as well as an educator of that history to the general public. The original statute also includes a mandate that the NJHC aid in the “development of libraries, museums [and] historic sites.” This statement seems to be an explicit directive to the NJHC to view organizations such as historical societies as fundamental to its own purpose and to correlate the development of these organizations with that of the NJHC itself.

Also in 1967, the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT) was established as a non-profit organization “in but not of” the Department of State—the only non-profit

53 “New Jersey Historical Commission,” *New Jersey Historical Commission*, <http://nj.gov/state/historical>.

organization to ever be created by New Jersey law. It is currently affiliated with the Department of Community Affairs. While it was set up to operate as a non-profit organization, it was described in its original statute as an “essential governmental function of the State,” and therefore connected but not managed by its affiliated department.⁵⁴ According to the NJHT’s website, its mission is to “advance historic preservation in New Jersey for the benefit of future generations through education, stewardship and financial investment programs.”⁵⁵

The NJHT is governed by a board of trustees consisting of both public and private individuals, demonstrating the uncommon relationship between the NJHT and the state government. Twelve board members are private citizens who represent geographically diverse regions of the state. The remaining three members are the State Treasurer, a representative from the New Jersey Historical Commission and a representative from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. The co-dependently designed relationships between the three agencies increases the convolution of their independent functions.

The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO) was established in the 1970s to carry out the specific mandates in the NHPA involving the appointment of a State Historic Preservation Officer and a State Review Board for nominations to the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places. The NJHPO operates within the Department of Environmental Protection. The NJHPO’s website states that its mission is to “assist the residents of New Jersey in identifying,

54 “About the Trust,” *NJ Historic Trust*, <http://www.njht.org/dca/njht/about>.

55 Ibid.

preserving, protecting and sustaining [the state's] historic and archaeological resources through the implementation of the state's historic preservation program."⁵⁶

In the 1970s, individual counties in New Jersey began establishing cultural and heritage or historical commissions to encourage countywide preservation and heritage tourism. Nearly every county in the state today has a commission of this kind. These county commissions are similar to municipal HPCs, but generally operate as preservation advocates, while municipal HPCs actively help shape the municipality's historic built environment. While some are more active than others, these county commissions generally distribute grants, develop and execute programs, promote awareness of cultural and historic sites and provide assistance to local organizations.

Many of them have also begun to act as intermediaries between the NJHC and local historical societies, through the NJHC's new County History Partnership Program (CHPP), created in 2015. CHPP enables the NJHC to focus on giving larger grants to its county partners, which in turn distribute smaller grants to local historical societies and other organizations. According to the NJHC, this program shifts the "responsibility for fostering the preservation, understanding and enjoyment of the local history of [individual] counties" from the NJHC to these county partners.⁵⁷

56 "Mission Statement," *Historic Preservation Office*, http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/mission_03_2011.pdf.

57 "County History Partnership Program," *New Jersey Historical Commission*, <http://www.nj.gov/state/historical/pdf/njhc-fy2017-chpp-guidelines.pdf>.

The NJHC's funding guidelines now require organizations seeking grants directly from them to have an annual operating budget of at least \$100,000. Just under 15% of the historical societies analyzed in this study meet that criteria, and it is likely that the total percentage of eligible societies throughout the state is much lower. While the CHPP frees up resources for the NJHC by transferring the administrative responsibilities of small grantmaking to individual counties, it has the potential to further alienate local historical societies whose primary interaction with the NJHC had been through applications for operating support grants.

Also in the 1970s, municipal governments in New Jersey began designating and regulating historic properties as a result of the expanding preservation movement throughout the state. Early on, the legality of these regulations was challenged, but in 1986, the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law was amended to formally authorize municipalities to identify, evaluate, designate and regulate local historic resources through the adoption of preservation ordinances and the creation of municipal historic preservation commissions.⁵⁸

As previously mentioned, the NJHPO conducted a statewide survey in 1999 to determine the number of historic preservation commissions throughout the state. The resulting directory included 165 commissions, just under 30% of the number of municipalities in New Jersey. Of the historical societies analyzed in this study, 66% are in municipalities which do have historic preservation commissions, although the

58 "Historic Preservation: A Historic Preservation Perspective," *Historic Preservation Office*, http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/hpo_article.pdf.

efficacy of those commissions and their involvement with the local historical society varies greatly.

An Important but Flawed Relationship

The NJHC, NJHT and NJHPO each make resources available or offer programs with the potential of benefiting historical societies throughout the state. The NJHC describes the relationship between the agency and historical societies as “important but flawed,”⁵⁹ while the NJHT refers to historical societies as “partners.”⁶⁰ However, the level of outreach to historical societies and the depth of programming developed and executed by these agencies does not make it evident that they believe historical societies are viable or effective vehicles of preservation. Additionally, the NJHC and NJHPO websites are not user-friendly—organizations seeking information from these websites may have difficulties finding it. The NJHT’s website is much more navigable, but also lacks a modern appearance and mobile scalability.

Despite the mandate in its founding statute to aid in the development of organizations such as historical societies, the NJHC website offers few resources for historical societies other than information about its funding programs. Besides the

59 Andrea Tingey (Historic Preservation Specialist, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office), email message to author, October 17, 2017.

60 Glenn Ceponis (Historic Preservation Specialist, New Jersey Historic Trust), email message to author, October 13, 2017.

general operating support and project grants for which organizations with annual budgets of less than \$100,000 are no longer eligible, the NJHC manages two collections assessment programs for organizations with no cost sharing required—the Caucus Archival Projects Evaluation Service (CAPES) and the Artifact Assessment Program (AAP). About half of the societies in this study indicated that they had participated in CAPES, with most of them stating that they had followed through with at least some of the recommendations in the resulting reports. The NJHC does not have a similar program for architectural assessments of properties owned by historical societies.

The NJHC also distributes annual prizes and awards to individuals, groups and organizations who make significant contributions in either the public history or preservation fields in New Jersey. Since 1977, the NJHC has given 278 Awards of Recognition for “scholarship, public service, conservation and preservation efforts”—19, or 7%, of them have been awarded to historical societies.⁶¹ Similarly, the NJHPO has an annual Historic Preservation Awards Program in which it recognizes individuals, organizations, agencies, projects, preservation documents and preservation-related innovations. Its main goals for the program are to “raise awareness of historic preservation efforts in New Jersey” and “recognize contributions [...] to preserve historic properties and advocate for preservation.” Since 2001, the NJHPO has given 145 awards—5, or 3%, of them have been awarded to historical societies. It is evident that these agencies have long been

61 “Grant and Award Opportunities,” *New Jersey Historical Commission*, http://www.nj.gov/state/historical/dos_his_grants.html.

aware of the apparent disconnection between historical societies and the practice of preservation, but representatives from both the NJHT and the NJHPO indicated that they have never researched that separation, and it is not clear if either agency has ever altered their outreach methods or program development based on attempts to bridge their own preservation efforts with local historical societies.⁶²

For several years, the NJHC and NJHT have partnered to offer a series of workshops entitled *Best Practices for History Organizations*. These workshops are offered about twice a year and are hosted by various organizations throughout the state. Workshop topics have included governance skills, board development, grant-writing, museum evaluation and strategic planning. Event costs range from \$15-\$50 per attendee. These workshops are typically attended by a wide range of individuals participating in the arena of public history, including historical society board members, volunteers and staff; county or municipal historical commission members; government employees of museums and libraries; and preservation or non-profit organization consultants.

This study has noted that one of the main factors contributing to the absence of most historical societies from the advocacy and practice of preservation throughout New Jersey is a lack of relevant knowledge by historical society board members, volunteers and/or staff. While a workshop series for these organizations should be considered an important method of collaboration and education by the

62 Glenn Ceponis (Historic Preservation Specialist, New Jersey Historic Trust), email message to author, October 13, 2017; Andrea Tingey (Historic Preservation Specialist, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office), email message to author, October 17, 2017.

NJHC, NJHT and NJHPO, it is not clear if any of these agencies have studied the efficacy of the *Best Practices* program in its current state or if topics on actively practicing preservation have been utilized in the program.

The NJHC, NJHT and NJHPO also jointly sponsor an annual historic preservation conference which is attended by many local historical societies. The conference lasts two days and has several educational presentations and hands-on workshops related to historic preservation. Attendees hear guest speakers on relevant topics and can participate in about five individual sessions during the conference. Although the conference is a successful preservation program offered by the three state agencies, its efficacy for historical societies may be limited due to the absence of follow-up programs and resources available for developing societies.

A representative from the NJHPO explained that, due to the diversity of the structure and operation of historical societies, the NJHPO finds it “challenging to design and implement a plan to involve and support them.”⁶³ Despite other organizational differences, nearly all of the historical societies in this study included the word preservation in their mission statements and most stated that they would like to be more involved with the preservation of their community’s built environment. If the state agencies tasked with promoting preservation throughout New Jersey support what is written on the NJHPO’s website—that the “most effective way to protect historic resources [...] is through local stewardship”⁶⁴—but

63 Andrea Tingey (Historic Preservation Specialist, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office), email message to author, October 17, 2017.

64 “Local Tools for Historic Preservation,” *Historic Preservation Office*, <http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/3preserve/preserve.htm>.

are unaware of the causality of disconnection between hundreds of local preservation-minded organizations and their practice of preservation, have these organizations failed in their development or have the agencies?

This assertion of the efficacy of local preservation efforts on the NJHPO's website is found on a page entitled "Local Tools for Historic Preservation." The tools listed on the page are: local historic preservation ordinances, historic preservation commissions and the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. Nothing is included of the work of local historical societies or preservation advocacy groups, or how they could be involved in the establishment or development of these municipal-level preservation efforts. In the NJHPO's *2013-2019 Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan*, ninety-eight organizations and agencies are listed as participants in the creation of the plan—none of them are historical societies.⁶⁵

The NJHPO's purview of local preservation is seemingly tied into local government. However, as previously mentioned, the NJHPO does not routinely study the historic preservation commissions throughout the state, so it cannot be aware of their true efficacy as vehicles of preservation either. On the surface, at least, there is a lack of clarity regarding the NJHPO's relationship with local preservation.

65 "2013-2019 New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan," *Historic Preservation Office*, http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/Index_HomePage_images_links/hpo_plan%202013_2019/hpoplan2014.pdf.

Several studies over the past few decades have suggested missed opportunities in the collaboration between the state preservation-related agencies and local organizations such as historical societies. In 1999, the NJHC Statute was amended to include information about the Task Force on New Jersey History's 1997 report, acknowledging the report's "indisputable proof that New Jersey's program of history services has suffered for many years from severe underfunding," resulting in "deteriorating historic sites and collections of historical artifacts and materials [and] inadequate training of volunteers who staff historic sites." One of the recommendations in the 1997 report was for the state to "encourage, train and reward volunteers in historic organizations."

In 2006, the New Jersey Heritage Tourism Task Force was created as an interagency group responsible for providing "strategic direction for the promotion of heritage tourism in New Jersey." Representatives from the NJHC, NJHT and NJHPO are members of the task force, along with fourteen other public and private individuals. The statute creating the task force lists one of its main purposes as "promoting coordination between historic sites throughout the State."⁶⁶ As evidenced by this study, the majority of historical societies throughout New Jersey either own or operate a historic site. Despite these repeated recommendations for state agencies to improve their relationships with local history organizations, the disconnection between them persists.

66 "Senate No. 2772," *State of New Jersey*, ftp://www.njleg.state.nj.us/20042005/S3000/2772_I1.htm.

In the NJHT's 2012 Capital Needs Survey, which led to its comprehensive 2013 organizational report *Keeping the Past Present*, the NJHT conducted a statewide survey of the owners of historic properties to "identify the state's near- and middle-term rehabilitation and restoration needs."⁶⁷ Of the 182 organizations and municipal, county and state governmental agencies which responded to the survey with the approximate total of funding needed to rehabilitate or restore their historic properties, 31, or 17%, of them were historical societies. The NJHT distributed the survey to its past grantees, specific government agencies and other organizations, including the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey.⁶⁸ The low response rate from historical societies throughout the state was likely due to the same lack of capacity among smaller societies—those without funding and staff may not have realized the significance of the survey or been able to complete it.

By contrast, 86% of the historical societies in this study own or operate a historic building, for which most of them expressed a need for capital funding. Although the NJHT's 2013 report acknowledged that the calculated total of \$751 million gathered from the survey respondents "is a significant underestimate" and that "the need is demonstrably larger," the low number of historical society

⁶⁷ "Keeping the Past Present: The New Jersey Historic Trust 1967-2013," *New Jersey Historic Trust*, <http://njht.org/dca/njht/resources/Capital%20Needs%20Final.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Glenn Ceponis (Historic Preservation Specialist, New Jersey Historic Trust), email message to author, October 13, 2017.

respondents is another illustration of the disconnection and missed opportunities for collaboration between historical societies and the NJHC, NJHT and NJHPO.⁶⁹

Financial Distribution for Preservation

Both the NJHC and NJHT manage funding programs for which historical societies may be eligible to apply. In 2017, the NJHC distributed \$2.5 million in general operating and project grants to organizations, individuals and governmental agencies.⁷⁰ As previously mentioned, organizations must now have an annual operating budget of at least \$100,000 to apply for the general operating and project grants directly from the NJHC.

The 2017 CHPP grants to the NJHC's county partners equaled \$768,160, or about 30% of the total amount distributed.⁷¹ CHPP county agencies may apply for operating support for themselves as well as re-grant funding for local organizations. The CHPP guidelines do not mandate that a minimum amount of re-grants be administered by each county, and the NJHC website does not offer information about how much of that 30% is being re-granted to other organizations.

69 "Keeping the Past Present: The New Jersey Historic Trust 1967-2013," *New Jersey Historic Trust*, <http://njht.org/dca/njht/resources/Capital%20Needs%20Final.pdf>.

70 "Fiscal Year 2017 Statewide Grant Award Recipients," *New Jersey Historical Commission*, <http://www.nj.gov/state/historical/pdf/fy2017-all-grants.pdf>.

71 Ibid.

Additionally, this separation of grant applications from small historical societies and organizations by the NJHC makes it much more difficult to research and view these grant applications, which offer valuable insights into the structure and operation of local historical societies.

The NJHT manages several funding programs, including a revolving loan fund, capital preservation grants, historic site management grants and small project grants. Much of the funding for the NJHT is received through state legislation—referendum bond funds, the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the recently established Corporate Business Tax dedication. With those funds, according to the Garden State Preservation Trust’s website, the NJHT granted about \$133 million to organizations and governmental agencies from 1992 to 2016.

Essex County received the highest amount of grant funding at nearly \$16 million while Sussex County received the lowest amount at about half a million. Nine counties received less than \$5 million, with their combined total amounting to nearly \$27.5 million. By contrast, the combined total of the three counties which received the highest amounts of funding is nearly \$43 million.⁷² An analysis of this data shows a pattern of disproportionate distribution of preservation funding throughout the state, although these numbers are likely due to a confluence of factors, including the lack of capacity among local historical societies and the lack of research done by state agencies regarding the preservation needs of local historical societies.

⁷² “Historic Preservation All Grants 1992 Thru FY2016,” *Garden State Preservation Trust*, <http://www.state.nj.us/gspth/historic-preservation.html>.

As illustrated in Table 2, five of the nine counties that received less than \$5 million each in preservation funding from the NJHT are also in the nine lowest-funded counties from the NJHC’s 2017 CHPP grants. Additionally, five of the nine counties that received less than \$5 million each in preservation funding from the NJHT are also in the nine lowest median income counties in the state. This suggests that county median income is a factor for state preservation funding distribution, although this study has illuminated the underlying circumstances for this include a lack of capacity and/or awareness of funding opportunities among historical society board members coupled with a lack of outreach and targeted programs offered by the state history and historic preservation agencies.

NJHT GRANTS 1992-2016		NJHC CHPP GRANTS 2017		MEDIAN INCOME		REGISTERED SITES	
Essex	\$ 15,885,719	Middlesex	\$ 148,820	Hunterdon	\$105,444	Bergen	287
Mercer	\$ 14,768,070	Ocean	\$ 75,100	Somerset	\$100,667	Essex	237
Monmouth	\$ 12,325,027	Bergen	\$ 60,000	Morris	\$100,214	Morris	193
Hudson	\$ 9,604,168	Union	\$ 57,550	Sussex	\$86,565	Mercer	140
Morris	\$ 8,882,097	Somerset	\$ 44,750	Bergen	\$85,806	Monmouth	116
Middlesex	\$ 7,200,181	Mercer	\$ 43,880	Monmouth	\$85,242	Hunterdon	113
Union	\$ 6,912,918	Morris	\$ 43,520	Middlesex	\$79,593	Somerset	101
Burlington	\$ 6,666,404	Hudson	\$ 38,000	Burlington	\$78,621	Burlington	97
Bergen	\$ 6,449,360	Hunterdon	\$ 32,490	Gloucester	\$76,727	Camden	91
Cape May	\$ 5,827,932	Sussex	\$ 30,440	Mercer	\$72,804	Middlesex	87
Passaic	\$ 5,742,564	Burlington	\$ 27,030	Warren	\$70,471	Hudson	77
Somerset	\$ 5,590,523	Gloucester	\$ 25,000	Union	\$69,594	Union	75
Cumberland	\$ 4,557,965	Monmouth	\$ 25,000	Camden	\$62,185	Warren	59
Hunterdon	\$ 4,243,394	Essex	\$ 23,180	Ocean	\$61,994	Cape May	56
Camden	\$ 4,088,767	Cumberland	\$ 21,000	Salem	\$61,831	Atlantic	46
Ocean	\$ 3,542,217	Cape May	\$ 16,200	Hudson	\$59,741	Ocean	46
Warren	\$ 3,147,469	Passaic	\$ 14,540	Passaic	\$59,739	Passaic	45
Atlantic	\$ 3,025,557	Atlantic	\$ 14,400	Cape May	\$57,637	Sussex	45
Salem	\$ 2,255,145	Salem	\$ 14,310	Atlantic	\$54,461	Gloucester	44
Gloucester	\$ 1,974,029	Camden	\$ 12,950	Essex	\$53,976	Cumberland	29
Sussex	\$ 560,974	Warren	\$ -	Cumberland	\$49,984	Salem	27

Table 2: Analysis of New Jersey counties based on their level of state preservation funding, median income and number of NJRHP/NRHP sites. The nine lowest funded NJHT counties in the first column are in bold. The same counties which fall

into the nine lowest of the three subsequent columns are also in bold. This chart shows that the majority of the nine lowest funded NJHT counties are also in the lowest funded CHPP counties and have the lowest number of NJRHP/NRHP sites and the lowest median income.

Seven of the nine counties that received less than \$5 million each in preservation funding from the NJHT are also in the nine counties with the lowest number of historic sites listed in either the New Jersey or National Registers of Historic Places. The total number of NRHP or NJRHP sites within the top three funded counties is 493, while the total number within the bottom nine funded counties is 397. However, when the number of square miles per county is examined, only one of the nine counties that received less than \$5 million each in preservation funding from the NJHT is in the nine counties with the lowest number of square miles. The total number of square miles of the nine counties that received less than \$5 million each in preservation funding from the NJHT is about 3,900, while the total number of square miles of the three counties that received the highest amounts of funding is about 827. Seven of the bottom nine funded counties do also fall into the nine lowest populated counties in the state but the overall population of the nine counties is approximately 2.3 million, while the population of the top three funded counties is approximately 1.8 million. This suggests that, despite the size of the counties, the cumulative analysis of the population of these counties does not explain the disparity of funding.

Despite polarities in county median incomes, the similarity of overall population and the substantial difference in overall square mileage suggests that the bottom nine and top three NJHT funded counties should at the least have a close

total funding share. With the top three funded counties receiving 56% more funding than the bottom nine funded counties (\$43 million versus \$27.5 million), a deeper understanding of the NJHT funding application process is warranted in further studies on this topic. This study did not reveal exact statistics of the number of applications received by each county from 1992-2016, or the methods employed by NJHT officials to examine the distribution of its funding and to engage in targeted outreach for the purpose of broadening or equalizing that distribution. However, with an increased capacity by local historical societies in underfunded areas, the number of applications for preservation funding would also increase, thereby likely shrinking the disparity of funding throughout the state.

The NJHPO does not administer grants to organizations but does manage the state's CLG grant funding program, which distributes grants only to municipalities which are Certified Local Governments. Currently, there are only 45 CLGs in New Jersey.⁷³ To be eligible for the CLG program, municipalities must have both a historic preservation ordinance and an active historic preservation commission. These municipalities are exclusively eligible for the CLG grant funding program, which supports their work in various preservation-related activities, including "historic resource surveys, National Register nominations, historic preservation education projects, historic structures reports and preservation plans."⁷⁴ Historical societies could be compelling advocates for their municipal

73 "New Jersey Certified Local Governments," *New Jersey Historic Preservation Office*, http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/3preserve/clg_links.htm.

74 "Local Tools for Historic Preservation," *New Jersey Historic Preservation Office*, <http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/3preserve/local.htm>.

governments to become more involved with preservation through the adoption of preservation ordinances, the creation of historic preservation commissions and the participation in the CLG program, but the NJHPO offers no guidance for societies on this process on the NJHPO website.

Combating Insulated Preservation Efforts: Moving Forward

Based on the relationships between New Jersey historical societies and the three agencies tasked with advocating for and practicing the preservation of the state's historic built environment, this study illustrates a strong opportunity for the NJHC, NJHT and NJHPO to accelerate advancements in their outreach and programming targeted to historical societies.

Before 1966, a general trend of historical societies was the perception of the societies as private clubs for their members. Combating this insulated preservation force with statewide preservation efforts proved an effective catalyst for historical societies in general to become more accessible. However, rather than state agencies and historical societies working together as serious partners and stakeholders in the state's preservation efforts, historical societies have in general become alienated from the statewide preservation movement. The perception of historical societies as generally unprofessional and incapable of seriously contributing to preservation efforts has led to weaknesses in organizational development programs and a

disparity of large, well-funded and professionally-staffed historical societies and small societies which are underfunded and unstaffed.

By recognizing this underrated relationship and the significant potential of historical societies as vehicles of local preservation, these state agencies could utilize their resources to develop and execute more effective programs for collaboration with historical societies and preservation activity. The subsequent chapter presents specific recommendations resulting from this study directed toward both historical societies and state preservation agencies.

CHAPTER IV. REPAIRING A MUTUAL DISCONNECTION: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This treatise's examination of the national historical society and preservation movements shows that they have had from their beginnings a symbiotic relationship. Preservation is most effective in general when practiced locally in particular; historical societies are by self-designation and by public thought formed to preserve their local communities.

Based on this treatise's study of historical societies in New Jersey and their efficacy as vehicles of preservation of the built environment as well as historical records and artifacts, there is at present a mutual disconnection between local historical societies throughout the state and the three state-level agencies tasked with the promotion and funding of history and historic preservation in New Jersey—the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT), the New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO). The study found that less than 30% of historical societies throughout the state are participating in preservation through active advocacy, historic register nominations

and/or acquisition and rehabilitation of historic structures, while nearly all historical societies indicated that they would be more involved in preservation if their funding, resources and knowledge permitted.

The study further found that the resources, services and programs offered by the NJHT, NJHC and NJHPO to historical societies are not doing enough to bridge the gaps between historical societies and the practice of preservation. A force of nearly 400 organizations throughout the state capable and educated to advocate for and practice preservation would be a monumental addition to the state's preservation efforts. The cultivation of these organizations for that purpose should be a key factor in these agencies' ongoing work.

To reinvigorate statewide preservation efforts, this treatise outlines specific recommendations based on the missed opportunities for collaboration illuminated by this study between the three State history and historic preservation agencies and historical societies throughout the state.

Recommendations for Historical Societies

About 80% of the organizational members of the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (LHSNJ) are historical societies, with the remaining members made up of libraries, archives, museums and individuals. These nearly 200 organizations make up about half of the total number of historical societies which exist in New Jersey, although many of the societies which are not members may be

either somewhat or completely inactive. Due to its large membership base and its own long-established organization, the LHSNJ is well-situated to take a lead role in the development of historical societies throughout the state as vehicles of preservation.

Positions within the LHSNJ board include a President, four Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chair and Historian. The LHSNJ should create a new position entitled Preservation Resource Chair. This individual would lead the LHSNJ's efforts to provide historical societies with the resources, knowledge and support necessary for them to become more effective advocates and practitioners of preservation of the built environment.

The LHSNJ's Preservation Resource Chairperson should develop a series of critical meetings, discussions and surveys of its historical society organizational members to create a manifesto of common goals. Based on the survey in this treatise, historical societies in New Jersey overwhelmingly attribute equal significance to the preservation of artifacts and written records and the preservation of the built environment. By establishing a list of common goals, the LHSNJ can better help historical societies in New Jersey achieve those goals through specific workshops, information and other resources. As a more substantial entity than most individual historical societies in the state, the LHSNJ can also use those goals to advocate for additional resources and funding from state agencies and private foundations.

As the state's only membership-based statewide preservation organization, Preservation New Jersey (PNJ) should take a more active role in the cultivation of

historical societies as vehicles of preservation. As the leading non-profit advocate for preservation legislation and funding in New Jersey, PNJ should create a large and easily accessible resource database for historical societies and other preservation-related organizations on its website. The database, comprised of articles, videos and links, should include educational tools for learning and teaching the basics of preservation, up-to-date preservation legislation, preservation advocacy tools and effective practices and guides for transforming a historical society to a local preservation leader. Other information for historical societies should include where and how to find and receive preservation funding.

Nearly all historical societies in this survey included the word preservation in their mission statement. Individual historical societies should assess both their commitment to the preservation of the built environment and the current state of their locality's built historic resources. Societies should determine whether their involvement in the preservation of those resources is urgent, and if so, should update their organization's strategic plan, or develop one with that in mind. Historical societies in localities without a municipal historic preservation Commission (HPC)—or with an inactive one—and no other preservation organizations should especially consider their role in the preservation of that locality as imperative.

If funding permits, historical societies should actively preserve the built environment around them through acquisition, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use. As illustrated by several societies in this study, a successful and sustainable approach to active preservation of historic structures by historical societies involves either

utilizing the properties as living historic resources rather than traditional house museums or rehabilitating historic properties before renting or selling them to other businesses or organizations.

Societies without such means should become their area's leading advocate of preservation by educating themselves about federal and state preservation laws and preservation economics, by encouraging the establishment or development of a municipal HPC and of CLG status and by promoting awareness within their community of the need for and benefits of preservation of the built environment. As local preservation advocates, societies should develop new programming with preservation topics, such as repairing historic windows or utilizing historic tax credits, to provide hands-on preservation education for diverse groups within their communities. Societies should also disseminate information regarding preservation incentives, such as federal and state tax credits and local property tax abatement programs.

Based on this study's findings of the common needs of historical societies and on the suggestions of the study's most successful historical societies, societies in New Jersey can greatly improve their efficacy as vehicles of preservation by incorporating a few changes in their structure and operation.

Most societies in this study stated that their greatest need was for the addition of younger members who would ensure the perpetuation of the organization and its work. However, the average age of board members of societies in this study is sixty. To appeal to a younger audience, historical societies should seek out younger board members and empower them to help guide the organization

in new, modern developments. History students at local colleges may be particularly interested in the opportunity to take a lead role in small historical organizations where their passions, education and modern perspectives can revitalize stagnant societies.

Historical societies should also make specific projects available—such as historic research, archive digitization and community outreach—and solicit help from high school and college students. Many students with an interest in history may be unaware of the activities of local historical societies or even of their existence. One of the biggest impediments to growth within historical societies is a prevalence among society members of fostering a closed-society environment, deterring volunteers whose ideas may seem radical to the society's long-term status quo. As this treatise shows, historical societies in New Jersey have the potential to be a driving force for preservation throughout the state, but to do so, and to address their concerns for sustainability, they must embrace organizational changes and a modernized approach to public history.

As the youngest historical society included in this study, the Blairstown Museum is a prime example of an organization operating with a modernized approach to public history. The Museum offers compelling programming which appeals to a diverse audience and utilizes its historic building as a living historic resource and an integrated part of the continuing life of the community. Its staff routinely studies the successful outreach methods of larger national and international institutions for programming inspiration. The Museum's plans for active participation in local preservation also illustrate a modern approach to

historic preservation and one which could be adopted by many other historical societies. Its primary preservation program will be focused on identifying local historic properties in need of rehabilitation and collaborating with the property owners to raise the funds needed to rehabilitate the structures according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. This is a method which allows historical societies to engage in preservation without purchasing historic properties, addressing the primary reason given by historical societies in this study for not actively participating in preservation.

The historical societies in this study which most actively participate in preservation also have a more diverse board. Stagnant societies typically re-elect trustees many times over without evaluating the significance of their role on the board or acknowledging gaps within the board's professional makeup. While amateur enthusiasm for history is a fundamental cornerstone of local historical societies, societies should endeavor to also add professional preservationists, architects and historians to their board membership, in addition to younger professionals, all of whose insights and connections can greatly improve the society's development. In cases where it is not feasible to add interested professionals in this field to the board, societies should establish an ongoing series of workshops or lectures given by professionals for the board on relevant topics, such as architectural terms and reports and state preservation laws and funding sources. Societies whose by-laws do not include trustee term limits should also consider adding a provision limiting the number of consecutive terms for which

trustees can be re-elected to the board, to foster the development of a diverse, fresh board.

Recommendations for State Agencies

Because statewide history and historic preservation efforts in New Jersey are led by three agencies in separate state departments—the NJHT, NJHC and the NJHPO—the roles of each and their individual programs, services and resources available to historical societies are ambiguous even to professional preservationists. This confusion is amplified by the agencies’ outdated websites and the lack of information easily accessible on them. While the NJHT website is more user-friendly than the NJHC’s or NJHPO’s, all three sites should be modernized.

A short publication detailing the history of the NJHT, NJHC and NJHPO and their current responsibilities within the state-led preservation effort should be jointly created and disseminated by the three agencies. It should be available on their websites and distributed by each to their grantees and to their contact lists for historical societies and other organizations. This will immediately help to clear up confusion about the work of each agency.

As this treatise has shown an inequitable distribution of preservation funding across the state, the NJHT, NJHC and NJHPO should each conduct a comprehensive evaluation of their funding processes, outreach methods and preservation goals. Using a similar analysis as this study, these agencies will

discover an identifiable distinction in preservation funding between the counties with the highest and lowest median incomes, as well as other factors.

Of the nine lowest funded counties in the NJHC's 2017 County History Partnership Program (CHPP), seven are also in the nine lowest counties by median income. Of the nine lowest funded counties in all grants given by the NJHT from 1992-2016, five are also in the nine lowest counties by median income. The top three NJHT funded counties received 32% of the total funding, while the bottom nine NJHT funded counties received 21% of the total funding. The population of the top three NJHT funded counties is 20% of the state, while the population of the bottom nine NJHT funded counties is 25% of the state. The top three NJHT funded counties have 16% of the total number of historical societies in the state, while the bottom nine NJHT funded counties have 39% of the total historical societies in the state.

The data analyzed in this treatise shows that preservation funding by county is not proportionate to county population, square miles or number of historical societies, but is correlated to county median income (see Table 3). Based on the lack of capacity of historical societies outlined in this study, historical societies located in counties with lower median incomes are less likely to be able to find applicable grants and write grant applications and have therefore received a substantially lower percentage of state-granted preservation funding.

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of their preservation funding throughout the state, the NJHT, NJHC and NJHPO can help discover the underlying

factors for this inequitable distribution and create new outreach methods to address them.

	TOP 3 FUNDED COUNTIES	BOTTOM 9 FUNDED COUNTIES
	Essex, Mercer, Monmouth	Cumberland, Hunterdon, Camden, Ocean, Warren, Atlantic, Salem, Gloucester, Sussex
Population of State	20%	25%
Historical Societies in State	16%	39%
NJRHP/NRHP Sites in State	25%	25%
NJHT Funding 1992-2016	32%	21%
Combined Median Income Ranking in State	8	14

Table 3: Chart showing that the disparity between the top three funded counties and the bottom nine funded counties by the NJHT is directly correlated to median income, rather than population, number of historical societies or number of registered sites.

To capitalize on the potential of historical societies as vehicles of preservation and to reinvigorate statewide preservation efforts, the NJHT, NJHC or the NJHPO should create a Local History and Preservation Services program. These agencies should evaluate similar programs in other states to determine the most successful methods and tools utilized in their programs. The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), which houses the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Office (WHPO), operates the oldest field services program in the nation, which was established in 1898 by state legislation. The WHS employs two Field Services Representatives who manage the program, which provides resources, instruction and support to local historical organizations.

Wisconsin organizations are eligible to be a part of the WHS’ Field Services Program, which terms its organizational members “affiliates,” by being

incorporated as a non-profit historical organization, making membership in their organization available to anyone, holding annual meetings to elect board members, maintaining financial and collection records and filing annual reports with the WHS. There is no cost to apply for or maintain organizational membership in the program. The program currently has nearly four hundred affiliates made up of county, local and specialized historical organizations. These affiliates are eligible for WHS grants and can receive “professional and technical services” from WHS staff.⁷⁵ They become voting members of both the WHS and the Wisconsin Council for Local History (WCLH), a council formed by the WHS to “serve as a voice of local historians” and to “promote communication and cooperation among local history groups.”⁷⁶

Information for WHS’ local history affiliates is easily accessible on the WHS website—including articles on how to establish and operate a historical society, finding and applying for grants, organizing preservation advocacy efforts and communicating a preservation message to diverse audiences. This type of information is either not available or not easily discoverable on the websites of the NJHT, NJHC and the NJHPO.

The establishment of a Local History and Preservation Services program in New Jersey would enable better communication, education and partnerships between state preservation agencies and local historical societies. The three agencies

⁷⁵ “Local History Affiliation,” *Wisconsin Historical Society*, https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/localhist/HFLH_FAQ-Affiliation.pdf.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

should work with the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (LHSNJ) to create a comprehensive list of historical societies in New Jersey and record their current activity level and identifiable needs for development. With this information, the agencies and the LHSNJ can more effectively support a movement for historical societies to become more knowledgeable and involved in local preservation of the built environment. Consequently, the resources and workshops offered by the agencies, such as the NJHT's *Best Practices for Nonprofit History Organizations* series can be specifically developed to target the distinct needs of both large, well-funded organizations and small organizations with less capacity.

Through the newly established Local History and Preservation Services program, or as a joint project by the NJHT, NJHC and the NJHPO, one or all of the agencies should develop a collaborative series of discussions among the three agencies and local historical societies throughout the state. Just as local historical societies took the initiative to meet with government representatives across the nation before the formation of federal preservation laws to create a unified voice for the new national preservation movement, these state preservation agencies should now lead efforts to cultivate a new phase of preservation within New Jersey by initiating a deeper connection between the agencies and local historical societies.

One of the key factors identified in this study as differentiating historical societies which do apply for and receive grants and those which do not is their employment of professional staff, whether part-time or full-time. Once established, the Local History and Preservation Services office should develop a pilot program to provide professional staff to developing historical societies on a short-term, goal-

driven basis. For example, the program could fund the salaries of new, part-time staff members who meet the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for History for eligible historical societies currently unstaffed. The grant funds could be limited to six-month or one-year periods wherein the historical societies must participate in various workshops and work toward specific outreach, fundraising and developmental goals. If implemented throughout the state on a revolving basis, this type of program could be extremely instrumental in jumpstarting a statewide expansion of the practice of preservation.

Because state-led history and historic preservation efforts are spread among three agencies, there is no central Internet presence dedicated to statewide preservation in New Jersey targeted to the general public. The NJHT, NJHC and the NJHPO should jointly create and develop a separate website as a modern, central resource for information regarding state-led preservation efforts, statewide preservation laws and historic resources throughout the state. The site could also encourage community and individual involvement in historic preservation by allowing users to upload photographs and review historic sites. A corresponding app could enable users to quickly and easily discover nearby historic sites throughout New Jersey.

The NJHT has recently created a new website called Journey through Jersey which highlights historic properties throughout the state. It has a modern and easily navigable appearance and fills a need for such a site aimed at the general public in New Jersey as its audience. It currently has about fifty sites listed. The NJHT should continue to improve the site by adding many more historic properties to its list and

map, by including new ways to actively engage its audience and by launching a promotion campaign of the site throughout the state.

Conclusion

By implementing these recommendations, historical societies and state preservation agencies in New Jersey can develop a powerful, unified preservation movement throughout the state. Progressive changes made concurrently at local and state levels will advance the movement at a quicker rate and help ensure the preservation of the state's locally significant built environment. Increased preservation efforts will not only benefit local, county and state governmental levels economically, but strengthen and expand the singular heritage of New Jersey.

To work toward this objective, change must be enacted at both the local organizational and the state governmental level. Individual historical societies should assess or renew their commitment to the preservation of the built environment and develop strategies, programs and outreach around it. As part of their strategic planning process, societies should assess their own organizational weaknesses, those particular to their organization and those common to local historical societies—such as the need for younger members, a more diverse board and modern programming—and embrace change as a necessity for sustainability and for the achievement of their mission to preserve the history of their community.

The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey (LHSNJ) should assess its role as a significant voice for all historical societies throughout the state and expand its own commitment to the preservation of the built environment through new preservation committees, resources and advocacy strategies. As a statewide historic preservation organization, Preservation New Jersey (PNJ) should assess the potential for historical societies to be a driving force in the preservation movement, and expand its resources, programs and outreach to include those specifically for historical societies.

At the state governmental level, the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT), New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) and the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJHPO) should assess the efficacy of their programs, funding distribution and resources available to historical societies.

If the NJHT, NJHC and the NJHPO transform their programming to be more aligned with the developmental needs of historical societies and their funding to be more equitably distributed across the state, while New Jersey historical societies dedicate their own development and outreach to incorporating preservation of the built environment as a foundation for all of their work, New Jersey can become a unified example of the cultural and economic benefits of historic preservation.

This treatise finds that the historical societies in New Jersey have an enormous potential to be effective vehicles of preservation, but that they are generally uncultivated as such. This treatise calls on the entire preservation arena in New Jersey to unify and expand under a common goal of the preservation of the

state's historic built environment and historic landscapes and work together to transform the efficacy of historical societies and catapult New Jersey into the forefront of the national preservation movement. Once steps are taken toward that end, further studies should be undertaken to provide a clear path for other states to emulate.

Further research should be conducted on the effect of historical societies, historic preservation commissions and certified local governments on a community's historic built environment throughout New Jersey. This study has illuminated a complex web of active and potential preservation advocates and practitioners. With a deeper understanding of the developmental needs and goals of each, a more comprehensive plan can be established for their partnership.

Additional suggestions for further research include a comprehensive analysis of the effect of historical society support programs such as the Wisconsin Historical Society's Local History and Preservation Services program, and a study of preservation groups whose target audiences are younger people. By studying the events, programs and outreach methods of groups such as the Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh, historical societies and historic preservationists alike can better understand successful means of bridging the divide between young people and preservation. By appealing to a younger audience through alternative programming and marketing, local historical societies can address their predominating concern—sustainability and continuance.

APPENDIX I:
HISTORICAL SOCIETY STUDY BASE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What precipitated the founding of the historical society? (potential or actual loss of a historic site; historic event in locality, state or nation; etc.?)

How often does the society meet?

What is the size of the society's membership?

Describe the society's funding and budget.

What is the society's mission?

What types of events does the society have and how often are they held?

What are the society's biggest needs?

What is the society/board's vision for the future?

Does the society have paid staff? If so, how many?

If not, how many unpaid staff/volunteers and what are their roles?

Does the society's staff and/or any board members, volunteers meet the National standards for preservation professionals?

What kind of professional training/education does your staff have/continue to participate in? (do paid staff have master's degrees, certificates, etc. or other training in preservation?)

Does the society own any historic buildings, structures or sites? Does it maintain and/or operate any, whether or not it owns them?

Does the society follow the Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitation and cleaning methods?

Has the society ever completed or been involved with the completion of a nomination to the National or State Register?

How many buildings/sites in the county are listed in the National or State Register?

Does the society offer assistance to owners of historic buildings regarding their preservation?

Does the society have a working relationship with local leaders, politicians, government agencies?

Does the society have more of a relationship with local government or state government?

Does the county have a Preservation Plan? Does the city where the society is located have one?

Has the society ever been involved in the creation or adoption of local preservation laws?

Does the society offer input to state preservation leaders, groups about preservation?

APPENDIX II:
HISTORICAL SOCIETY STUDY INTERVIEW TIMELINE

Atlantic County Historical Society

Interviewed: Several staff and board members, 08/16/2016

Blairstown Museum

Interviewed: Jeanette Iurato, Curator, 09/11/2017

Califon Historic Society

Interviewed: Patty Nanna, Vice-President, 09/23/2017

Chester Historical Society

Interviewed: Edward Ng, President, 09/23/2017

Cranford Historical Society

Interviewed: Christine Glazer, Education Chairperson, 09/08/2017

Greater Egg Harbour Township Historical Society

Interviewed: June Sheridan, Chairman, 09/08/2017

Galloway Historical Society

Interviewed: Sarah Snow, Librarian, 09/08/2017

Greater Elmer Area Historical Society

Interviewed: Bonny Beth Elwell, President, 09/09/2017

Harmony Township Historical Society

Interviewed: Ruth Skirbst, 09/07/2017

Historical Society of Princeton

Interviewed: Izzy Kasdin, Director, 09/23/2017

Hudson County Historical Society

Interviewed: Doreen Bloomer, President, 09/20/2016

Long Beach Island Historical Association

Interviewed: Ron Marr, President, 09/23/2017

Mauricetown Historical Society

Interviewed: Julie Gandy, President, 09/06/2017

Ocean County Historical Society
Interviewed: Elizabeth Dudas, Board member, 09/25/2017

Pohatcong History and Heritage Society
Interviewed: Michael Marguiles, President, 09/09/2017

Salem County Historical Society
Interviewed: Richard Guido, Administrative Librarian, 08/19/2016

Sussex County Historical Society
Interviewed: Wayne McCabe, President, 09/25/2017

Sussex-Wantage Historical Society
Interviewed: Mario Poggi, President, 09/08/2017

Tewksbury Historical Society
Interviewed: Shawn Van Doren, President, 09/23/2017

Washington Township Historical Society
Interviewed: Betsy Guzinski, Board member, 09/25/2017

Winslow Township Historical Society
Interviewed: Jack Jennings, President, 09/07/2017

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