

Cannonball House Captures Flavor of Colonial Life

By **KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL**
Specially Written for Our Towns

To cross the threshold of the Osborn Cannonball House in Scotch Plains is to journey back in time, to an era when family farms dotted the landscape and independence fervor was sweeping the countryside.

Since 1972, families, students and members of community organizations have been taking such a journey, made possible by tours of the landmark home at 1840 Front Street, conducted by costumed docents.

Walking through the rooms of the small, white clapboard house, visitors not only learn the history of the home itself but also get a glimpse of how their forebears lived in the years before modern household conveniences.

The house, built circa 1760, was originally home to John and Abigail Osborn and all 10 members of their family, according to Assistant Curator Darlene Palombo. Mrs. Palombo stated that the house, as it stands today, still retains some of its original bricks and window panes.

The home also has many construction features typical of the Colonial period, including plaster made with animal hair and crushed oyster shells; wooden pegs rather than iron nails, and low ceilings and doors.

Mrs. Palombo added that the house remained a single-family dwelling until 1972, when its last owner sold it to the township. She said the last owner lived in the house from 1957 to 1972 and ran a small gift shop on the premises.

The recorded owners of the house include some well-known names in the annals of Scotch Plains-Fanwood area history, such as Osborn, Hetfield, Harper, Coles, Kelly and Snook. Records show that the Snook family was the last to own the landmark house before it was sold to the township.

According to Richard Bousquet, Chairman of the Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood, the house has been run by the society as a museum since being purchased



OUT OF THE PAST... The Osborn Cannonball House, at 1840 Front Street in Scotch Plains, is part of the township's historic heritage. Its rooms feature both Colonial and Victorian decor in tribute to its various owners over the years. Tours of the landmark house, led by costumed docents, are held on Sunday afternoons throughout the year, except for January and February.



TEA TIME... The parlor of the Osborn Cannonball House is decorated in Victorian style, while the remaining rooms recall the home's Colonial era. Built circa 1760, the residence serves as the museum of the Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

by the township.

He noted that all the furniture used to decorate the four rooms inside the home was donated by townspeople. Three of the rooms were decorated to reflect the Colonial lifestyle of its original owners, while the fourth features furniture and tokens from the Victorian era as a nod to its later owners.

According to Historical Society members, there has also been a careful restoration of the home's original kitchen. A Colonial-style flower and herb garden surrounds the premises, giving it even more of a feeling of the time period it represents.

Garden Curator Mary Cherrington, along with many other volunteers, keep the garden looking its best with weekly maintenance visits.

In back of the residence stands an old shed containing artifacts from the 1700s, including guns and farming materials.

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