The New Jersey Historical Commission (NJHC) is proud to announce the 2015 winners of the Richard Hughes Award, the Richard P. McCormick Prize, and Awards of Recognition. The official presentations will occur at the NJHC’s Annual Conference - Fighting for Justice: 20th – Century Activism in New Jersey - at the Paul Robeson Campus Center at Rutgers University-Newark on November 21st.

In addition, the New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance (NJSAA) will also be presenting its 2015 Graduate Paper Award and Teaching Awards at the event.

A full list of all 2015 award recipients is below.

Learn more about these and other NJHC awards

Register for “Fighting for Justice: 20th-Century Activism in New Jersey”

2015 Richard J. Hughes Award
Ian Burrow, Ph.D.

Dr. Ian Burrow has had a long and distinguished career as a historical archaeologist and preservationist. Prior to his emigration to New Jersey, he was educated in England at the University of Exeter and the University of Birmingham. He served as the county archaeologist for the counties of Somerset from 1979 - 1986, and Shropshire from 1975 - 1979. He was also the director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

Since 1988, Burrow has worked with his colleague Richard Hunter and served as principal archaeologist and vice president of Hunter Research, Inc. Headquartered in Trenton, the firm soon developed an enviable reputation for doing academic quality cultural resource management projects, often with very limited budgets. New Jersey’s historic sites and its understanding of the state’s past have benefited immeasurably from the work of their trowels and pens. Numerous sites across the state have seen the careful, thoughtful study that characterizes Burrows’ work which include the: Old Barracks; Petty’s Run; Jacobus Vanderveer House; Feltville Historic District; Deserted Village; Princeton Battlefield; Brearley House; Trent House; Appletree House; Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark; Howell Living History Farm and several prehistoric and historic sites along Route 29 in Trenton.

Burrow has a passion for teaching, evident since his time in Great Britain, which he has shared through his service as an adjunct faculty member at Drew, Rider, and Rutgers Universities. His passion for the past and his ability to make archaeological sites come to life is legendary. His students are lucky to have him.
At the same time, Burrow has played a significant role as an advocate for high quality cultural resource management. He is, or has been, a member or officer of numerous preservation organizations including: The Friends of the New Jersey State Museum; The Register of Professional Archaeologists, and The American Cultural Resources Association. As a former president of the latter two institutions, Burrow has been a strong leader and advocate for historic preservation and archaeology at the national level.

Ian has also shared his research through numerous publications and presentations, especially on military and industrial sites, and he has been honored by his colleagues with election as a Fellow both of the Archaeological Society of New Jersey and the Society of Antiquaries of London. He has also been the recipient of several New Jersey Historic Preservation Awards.

New Jersey has benefited measurably from the work of Ian Burrow, an enthusiastic and scholarly archaeologist. His work and career exemplifies the values celebrated by the Richard J. Hughes Award.

2015 Richard P. McCormick Prize

James J. Gigantino II

James Gigantino’s *The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey History, 1775-1865* offers a deeply-researched, well-crafted, and eminently readable account of the history of slavery and freedom in New Jersey from the American Revolution to slavery’s legal demise at the end of the Civil War. The book addresses one of the central issues and tragedies of American history, the long history of slavery and racial inequality. While most Americans have some familiarity with the history of plantation slavery in the South, the existence of slavery in the North is less well-known. As Gigantino aptly observes, New Jersey was not peripheral to the debate over slavery and freedom, but “is one of the best laboratories in which to test” the struggle between bondage and liberation in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Roughly 6% of New Jerseyans were enslaved according to the first Federal Census in 1790, and several counties recorded enslaved populations ranging between 10% and 18%. New Jersey was the last northern state to pass a law gradually abolishing slavery in 1804 and did not eliminate slavery until ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865.

Gigantino’s book offers a wide-ranging, multi-vocal account of key debates over slavery and its persistence. It explores the ways in which the state was a crossroads where the ideology of freedom collided with the economic interests and racial fears of the framers of the new nation. Most impressively, *The Ragged Road to Abolition* not only makes an important contribution to New Jersey history, but to the history of slavery in the United States and the Atlantic World as it makes a much broader argument about the complex relationship between slavery and freedom. Slavery and freedom he writes, were not simply polar opposites, but existed along a continuum. Slavery in various forms endured in New Jersey after the American Revolution and after
abolition in 1804, and its persistence shaped race relations and the meaning of citizenship in the state. The African American quest for full citizenship in New Jersey has its roots in the contradictions left along that ragged road to abolition.

James Gigantino’s *The Ragged Road to Abolition* is an auspicious first book for a young historian, and stands out among a field of many fine nominees for the 2015 McCormick Prize. This book will influence Americans’ understanding of slavery for decades to come, and not only adds to, but changes how we think about the history of slavery and race relations in the Garden State and in the United States.

2015 Award of Recognition

Special Collections and Local History Department, Plainfield Public Library

From a small, unorganized assortment of local history materials twenty-years ago, the Plainfield Public Library now operates a multifaceted local history program that has made great impact on the community and the state. The Library’s board of trustees has expressed its support by including the phrase “…preserving the history of the community…” in its mission statement.

Hallmarks of the program include: its professional staff of librarians, archivists, and genealogists who provide in-person service five days a week; the creation of metadata and finding aids to make the collection more accessible; and providing remote access through a content-rich website. The staff serves world-wide researchers and the Library’s digital archive contains over 55,000 images. In addition to the efforts of the staff, volunteers donate countless hours assisting with indexing to make research materials available to the public.

Library staff offers statewide colleagues professional development on best practices in local history through the New Jersey Library Association and Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. Training is provided for college history and library interns, and for individuals researching genealogy. The staff has continuously provided statewide leadership as the Plainfield Public Library was the first medium-size library in New Jersey to have a climate-controlled archives storage area.

The Special Collections and Local History Department has established a strong presence in its community through its outreach efforts to collect local documents from organizations, agencies, and churches. The Library lends archival items for exhibits; involves multigenerational audiences in its annual photography contest and exhibit; publishes news about departmental activities through e-newsletters and Facebook postings; coordinates a Memoir Writing Club for seniors; records oral histories; publishes “A Kid’s History of Plainfield;” and teaches students research methods for their local history and family history research.

Collection acquisitions have been made possible through extensive community contacts.
Monthly exhibits incorporate photographs and documents from the: Plainfield Photograph Collection, over 50,000 images by local photographers (1860s - present); Detwiller Blueprint Collection, 16,000 drawings of Plainfield houses and buildings documenting the architecture of the town (1887 - 2002); Historical Plainfield newspapers (1837 - current); Courier News archive (1870s - 2000s); local and New Jersey maps dating from 1832; personal papers and manuscripts (1772 - 2005) including extensive records from the Vail Family; and Diversity Studies Collection that includes oral histories, photographs, and monographs on the personal stories and collections of the Hispanic and African-American communities.

2015 Award of Recognition

Tuckerton Seaport & Baymen's Museum

Tuckerton Seaport & Baymen’s Museum is not only a community asset, it is a community anchor. The Seaport engages 468 volunteers who gladly donate over 54,000 hours each year to its mission. The site offers transformative contributions to its guests, volunteers, community, and New Jersey history.

In the wake of Superstorm Sandy the Museum increased its services as both a community museum and a community center. The Seaport demonstrated both visionary leadership and a commitment to civic engagement in addressing environmental disruptions and human displacement caused by the storm of historic proportion. Though its primary objective is preserving and presenting history, after the storm the Seaport expanded its services to offer economic, social, and emotional assistance to a community in need. Being a good neighbor, it offered a community gathering which fed over 800 local people who were displaced by the storm and hoping to reconnect with neighbors.

The Seaport’s outstanding efforts have been recently recognized by the American Association for State and Local History with an Award of Merit, and by the Institute for Museum and Library Services’ National Medal.

Giving is deep within the heart of this institution as it welcomes multigenerational volunteers who work on projects like the Community Garden. Employing traditional gardening methods, the vegetables produced in the garden are donated to the local food pantry. The Seaport is continually reaching out to other nonprofit groups and boasts 92 active partnerships.

Beyond being a community gathering place that fosters a sense of place and togetherness, the Seaport is a trusted source of support. Its leadership and vision takes the site beyond the definition of a traditional museum. It is a place that is by the community, for the community, and about the community. The seaport endures as an outstanding example of a sustainable community museum; a place for locals and newcomers to gather, socialize, and learn about the surrounding landscape, seasonal cycles, artistic expression, and way of life that was and is Barnegat Bay.
The Seaport’s development parallels that of the area’s history which is a tale of determination, adaptation, and resiliency. The Seaport is a vibrant hub and connector of preservation, interpretation and engagement rooted in place. Driven by the ordinary and extraordinary needs of the community, the museum preserves the traditions and spirit of its coastal culture and acts as a trusted keeper of the past and preserver of current events for future generations.

2015 Award of Recognition

David and Theresa Williams

David and Theresa Williams are residents of Wildwood Crest, New Jersey. A retired, volunteer couple, David and Theresa are strong advocates for Cape May County history. They have devoted their lives to promoting the heritage of the area. Through the use of technology, they have compiled a database of 14,000 photographs, documents, maps and antique ephemera on the County’s history. Most importantly, they make the collection accessible to over 200 people who receive their daily email messages containing a minimum of four images. The images enable broad use as they are not copyrighted. The information is disseminated free of charge and on a weekly basis. David and Theresa shoot pictures of historic sites slated for demolition and to raise awareness within the County regarding threatened historic sites. Unfortunately, many of the older barrier island (Ocean City to Cape May) houses have been torn down and thankfully the Williams’ collection preserves the history of lost sites. The Williams historical collection has proven to be invaluable for researchers, writers, historians, historical societies, archivists and genealogists.

NJSAA Graduate Paper Award 2015

Jonathan D. Cohen, University of Virginia, “This is Your Hometown: Collective Memory, Industrial Flight, and the Fate of Freehold, New Jersey."

Jonathan D. Cohen is a PhD Candidate in the Corcoran Department of History at the University of Virginia where he is writing a dissertation on the history of American state lotteries in the post-World War II period. He holds a B.A. from McGill University and is the managing editor of BOSS: The Biannual Online-Journal of Springsteen Studies.

NJSAA Teaching Award 2015
Abigail Perkiss, *Staring Out to Sea*

Dr. Abigail Perkiss is an Assistant Professor of History at Kean University. Since 2013, she has been working with students on a multi-year oral history project documenting the relief and recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Working with the regional oral history association, she created an oral history methods course, in which students worked collaboratively to develop a project focused around the storm. What originally began as a one-semester course has since grown into a multi-year project.

In the summer of 2013, three students from the original class took on internships at the Tuckerton Seaport Museum. They created a public exhibit about the Sandy recovery and conducted over 50 interviews in and around Tuckerton. In October 2013, the students and Dr. Perkiss traveled to Oklahoma City to present their project, *Staring out to Sea*, at the 2013 Oral History Association annual meeting. The students’ work was also featured in the American History Association’s *Perspectives on History* magazine. In the spring of 2015, the project received additional funding from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities and the New Jersey Historical Commission.

Dr. Perkiss has seen, in her words, “the the transformative power of oral history in the undergraduate classroom.” She states her two main goals as an educator as, first, for her students “to see themselves as scholars,” and second, “for them to think of themselves as historical actors, negotiating a complicated past at the same time that they are interacting with an ever-changing present.”

_______________

**NJSAA Teaching Award 2015**

**Kristen McClurg, Understanding the Geography of New Jersey and How It Relates to Students’ Lives**

Kristen McClurg teaches the fourth grade at Paradise Knoll Elementary School in West Milford Township. She is also the history/social studies specialist, preparing students for the fifth grade U.S. history curriculum. Her supervisor notes that Ms. McClurg “is constantly finding innovative ways to extend the students’ learning in and outside of the classroom.” She was instrumental in planning and budgeting class trips to the Thomas Edison Laboratory, the Long Pond Ironworks in Ringwood, and Sandy Hook Gateway National Park.

Her class project, *Understanding the Geography of New Jersey and How It Relates to Students’ Lives*, is an excellent example of her work. Throughout the school year, students learned about New Jersey from several different points of view: geographical, cultural, and historical. Students and their families were asked to collect artifacts from their travels around the state as well as
keeping a journal of their travels. They would then do research about the geography and history of an area of their choice in New Jersey. Finally, they would create complete and detailed map of the state.

The project is an excellent illustration of a classroom exercise that makes the teaching of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards come alive for students. Her supervisor notes that “Kristen works to uphold the strong legacy of the history and social sciences elementary program, and has gained the respect of her colleagues for incorporating new technology and projects into her pedagogy…Ms. McKlurg’s passion and motivation in teaching is in direct alignment with your committee’s criteria for the New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance Teaching Award.”

###